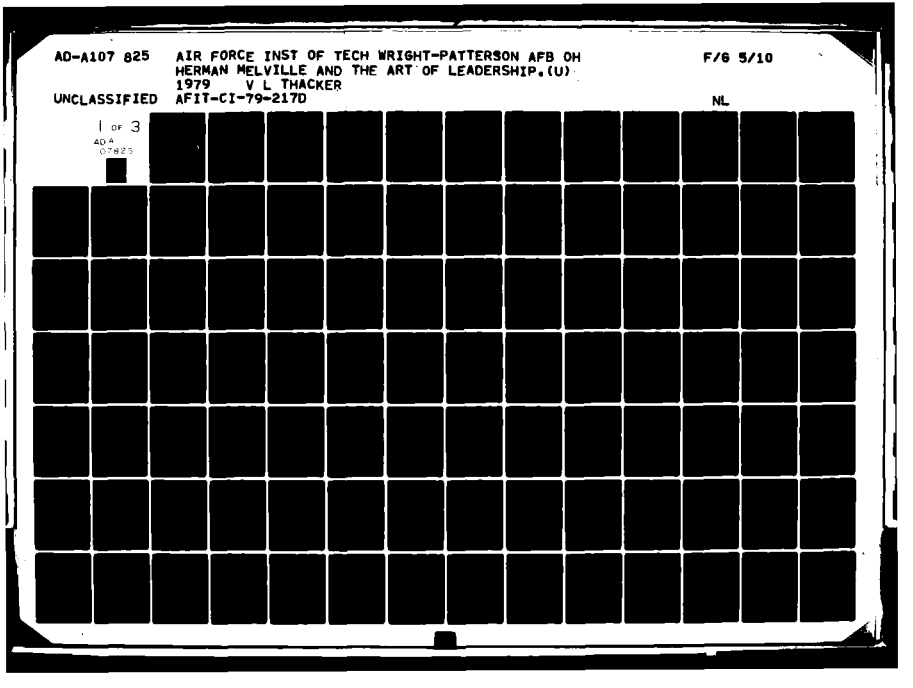
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ABSTRACT

VICTOR LARRY THACKER. Herman Melville and the Art of Leadership (Under the direction of RICHARD HARTER FOGLE).

The focus of this study is Melville's leaders and his changing attitude towards them. Melville becomes more sympathetic to his leaders as they begin to approach his concept of the ideal leader. This ideal is suggested in Typee and fully stated in Mardi and White-Jacket: it is a balance of head and heart, intelligence and discipline combined with inspiration and compassion. However, Melville never shows an ideal leader in action.

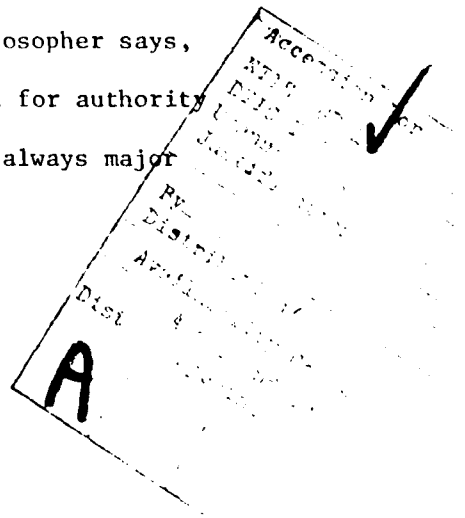
Melville's anti-authoritarian reputation needs to be clarified because he is not against authority as some claim. He is against abuses of authority. The reputation stems mainly from Redburn and White-Jacket; the three earlier works tend to counter it. They clearly reveal (1) Melville's belief in the necessity of authority; (2) his sympathy to the problems of leadership; and (3) his concept of the ideal leader. Of the four main ship captains in these works, only one is a tyrant; two seem ideal. Each of the protagonists becomes a leader: in Omoo and Mardi he learns the necessity of control and discipline. Leadership is a major theme in Mardi: the first part shows Taji developing qualities of the head; the second shows Media gaining heart.

The next three books focus on leaders who lack heart. Much of the anti-authoritarian reputation rests on White-Jacket, but a balanced reading shows that it also contains Melville's clearest statements on the necessity of authority. In addition, it provides

his most detailed analysis of leadership. Ahab has the potential to be Melville's ideal leader, but he subordinates his heart to his romantic, intellectual quest. The conservative ideas of limitation and lowered expectations from life are represented by Ishmael who opposes Ahab on matters of heart.

After Moby-Dick Melville gives Ishmael's conservative wisdom to the older leaders. His first attempt at depicting a balanced leader in action is John Paul Jones in Israel Potter. Melville's conservative attitude becomes readily apparent in the poetry, as does his fascination with the role of the leader. The need to act in spite of limited knowledge is a major theme of the poetry and is an important consideration in understanding Billy Budd. In the great stories, "Bartleby," "Benito Cereno," and Billy Budd, the central focus is on a leader's reaction to an extraordinary title character. In each story the leader's heart goes out to his other-worldly acquaintance. In each, the story is resolved by an assertion of intellect which tempers the leader's compassion to the demands of reality. These stories achieve their depth because Melville is sympathetic to both the title characters and the leaders who are "Everyman" in a position of authority. Vere is the most balanced leader Melville portrays in action.

At the climax of Media's education, the philosopher says, "None need a king, but many need a ruler." The need for authority and the nature of the ruler who administers it were always major concerns for Melville.



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# HERMAN MELVILLE AND THE ART OF LEADERSHIP

by

Victor Larry Thacker

A Dissertation submitted to the faculty of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English.

Chapel Hill

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CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

This is a study of Melville's leaders. It is not about Promethean gods (or any other kind), and it is not about heroes. However, a few of the leaders are sometimes heroic and sometimes god-like. It is not about the nature of authority or the existence of evil, although those broad subjects will have a place in the ensuing discussions. It is about characters who are leaders and about Melville's attitudes toward them.

Melville depicts the art of being a leader with increasing understanding throughout his career. In his own art, however, he understood from the beginning the dramatic value of the tensions inherent in a leadership situation--that is, one with a leader, at least one follower, and a goal or mission. The primary purpose of this study is to assess Melville's depiction of, and his attitudes toward, leaders and leadership. A secondary purpose is to contribute to the understanding that Melville's conservative tendencies were extant at the beginning of his career and not just the product of his old age.

Defining "leadership" and providing a brief summary of its importance to Melville will be a useful way to start this analysis of Melville's work. Since leaders influence or control others and since control is an essential ingredient in conservative political thought, a brief review of Melville's conservative tendencies will also provide important background material. Finally, a discussion of

continuity in the Melville canon will point out the advantages of studying it with a focus on his leaders.

Leadership is hard to define because the abilities, techniques, and character traits of one leader do not necessarily apply to another. The two basic approaches in defining leadership are finding common personality traits among leaders and measuring the effectiveness of leaders in actual situations. The first method is frequently found in the professional journals of the armed forces. The second method is primarily found in the discipline of sociology. For the purpose of this study, it will be enough to recognize that leadership is a social activity. It involves a leader, the led, and such circumstances as time, place, and mission or goals. Leadership is a combination of qualities, such as integrity, courage, competency, and insight, that allows one person to influence others to cooperate in achieving a goal. As we will see in the next chapter, Melville frequently divides these qualities into two groups: those of the heart and those of the head.

One central idea in this understanding of leadership is the ability to motivate--to inspire followers to do voluntarily whatever is necessary to complete the task at hand. Leadership is distinguished from command authority by this concept of voluntary following. Command authority can require obedience, willingly given or not, and has the power to enforce punishment on those who do not obey. Most of the authority figures Melville portrays are commanders only; he wishes they were leaders--at least he measures their performance by his idea of a good leader.

Leadership in general is such a vital issue that it is not

only a subject of discussion among philosophers and academicians, it is also newsworthy. Time magazine sponsored a conference on leadership in 1976 and has devoted a major portion of more than one issue to the subject. Whether in academic studies or popular debate, there is general agreement that there are two main types of leaders: the "task-master" and the "people person." At the Time conference, Harvard Government Professor James Q. Wilson, said of the two types:

> There is the goal-setter, or the critic, the person who says, "Follow me," who prods, challenges. Then there is the executive or the facilitator who is less concerned with setting goals. He is especially sensitive to the concerns of individuals. These two qualities are, for most people, incompatible.[1]

These two types are variously called activist, dux (literally leader), or "task-oriented" on the one hand, and stabilizer, rex (literally ruler), or "relationship-oriented" on the other.[2] Melville's ideal leader seems to combine the "incompatible" qualities--he can think and act and still care about his followers. Of course, most of Melville's leaders do not meet this high standard.

The three main parts of a leadership situation (the leader, the led, and the task) are easier to define than leadership itself. In the field of sociology, where leadership is a hotly debated subject, Fred E. Fiedler defines a leader as "the individual in the group given the task of directing and coordinating task-relevant group

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[1]Quoted in "Leadership: The Biggest Issue," Time, 8 Nov. 1976, p. 32.

[2]See, for example, Fred E. Fiedler, A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 13. For a current sampling of the state of the argument see Leadership: The Cutting Edge, ed. James G. Hunt and Lars L. Larson (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1977).

activities or who, in the absence of a designated leader, carries the primary responsibility for performing these functions in the group." He defines the group as "a set of individuals who share a common fate, that is, who are interdependent in the sense that an event which affects one member is likely to affect them all."[3] In Melville's fiction the "task-relevant group activities" are normally well defined, i.e. capturing whales, delivering cargo, or surviving. His leaders are normally "designated," that is, a government or a company gives to a certain individual the responsibility of successfully completing a mission. Melville, however, often makes use of the tension caused by lawful command residing in one person and true leadership in another, as when Mad Jack countermands Captain Claret's orders in White-Jacket. Of course, the interdependence of the group becomes an important idea, especially in the last chapter of White-Jacket and in Ishmael's commentary. As Willard Thorp said of Melville,

> [He] felt a deep concern for the destination of the inhabitants of the world which the ship enclosed. He pondered the social relationships, the code of life and manners, the clash of individual on individual, which determined the nature of this compact, artificial society and endeavored to relate what he saw there to the larger society which dispatched the ship on its errands of commerce or war. Every serious book or article which Melville wrote is a variation on the social theme.[4]

As a part of this social theme, the idea of leadership was important to Melville all of his life. In The Melville Log for the spring of 1838, Jay Leyda devotes six pages to an important, if somewhat tedious, debate published in The Albany Microscope. The argument

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[3]Fiedler, pp. 6-8.

[4]Willard Thorp, ed. Intro., Herman Melville (New York: American Book Co., 1938), p. xcviii.

was between Melville, the new president of the Philo Logos debating society, and Charles Van Loon, the former one. Van Loon accuses Melville of Machiavellian, or as he puts it "Melvillian," maneuvers to wrest the presidency from himself. Whatever the truth of the matter, the letters reveal that Melville's first and only experience as a formally recognized leader was not an untarnished triumph. The public debate ended after this communication, signed by the unidentified "R," appeared in The Microscope on 15 April 1838:

> Mr. Editor: Your paper abundantly testifies to the fact, that there is in all associations, pestiferous animals of a two-legged kind; who have crept in unawares, and scattered the seeds of dissolution in the once fair and flourishing institutions . . . Such an animal is the P***o L***s Society cursed with. He is there known by the title of Ciceronian Baboon; and his personal appearance fully established the correctness of the title. He is also known as dignitatus melvum . . . The reason why we cannot get rid of him is common to all associations. He, like a wary pettifogger, never considers "this side right, and that stark naught," or in other words, has no fixed principles, but can hear as the wind blows without gripings of conscience. This he considers a masterly display of his political powers. . . .[5]

Having "no fixed principles" may be Machiavellian, or it may just indicate that the novelist's temperament was already present in the eighteen-year-old Melville. The following spring he was on board the St. Lawrence bound for Liverpool. During the next five years he was a "follower" on five different ships. From this experience came the first-person narrators of the first five and a half books and, probably, a strong awareness of the need for good leadership. In these early works, Melville's sympathy is clearly with the narrator-

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[5]Jay Leyda, The Melville Log (1951; rpt. [with supplement] New York; Gordian Press, 1969), pp. 78-79. The supplemental chapter corrects the date from 14 April to 15 April, but it seems to confuse 1838 with 1837; see p. 907.

followers, the fictional protagonists who are reliving his own experiences. But leadership is a major concern too. The more or less tyrannical leadership of the various captains is always an impetus to physical action, like Tommo's and Taji's desertions, or psychological growth like that experienced by Redburn and White-Jacket.

Melville also works with the concept of leadership in more interesting ways. In fact, the first three narrators become leaders themselves. There is a continuing alternation of the leadership role between Tommo and Toby in their survival trek. In Omoo the narrator and Long Ghost exert leadership over the rest of the crew. In Mardi, Taji's development is an important step in both the leadership motif and Melville's artistic growth. When Melville first steps from imaginative remembering to imaginative inventing, he puts his protagonist into a formal leadership role: Taji commands first the boat in which he and Jarl desert from the Arcturion and, later, the Parki.

The emphasis changes in the next three books where the narrators stay on their ships and have to adjust to the conditions they find. In Redburn we see a leader with qualities of the head but with few of the heart. In White-Jacket the relationship between the two is thoroughly explored by juxtaposing pairs of officers. Then in Moby-Dick, Melville attempts a sustained, in-depth portrait of a leader; it is no accident that the first-person narrator more or less disappears. Or, to state it another way, since the "whole story" is Ishmael's, Ishmael knows that it would be indecorous, not to say impossible, for him to know what his commander was thinking. To give credibility to those scenes to which he could not be privy, he drops

the first-person narration. Omniscience allows the narrator to explain Ahab's decisions, and we get to see a skillful leader both motivating his crew and protecting his command from the threat that Starbuck represents. Another key in this depiction of leadership is the humanizing of the tyrant. As Charles Olson and others have shown, the tragedy of another leader, King Lear, was very influential in Melville's presentation of Ahab.[6] After Moby-Dick there are very few youthful, or innocent, first-person narrators; there are no more tyrants.

At this point in the canon, also, works begin appearing which are not so significantly involved in leadership. While, by definition, Pierre, The Confidence-Man, Clarel, and certain poems and short stories are not central to this study, some observations will be offered on the effects of not having a leadership situation in these works.

After Pierre the protagonists in the great stories ("Bartleby," "Benito Cereno," and Billy Budd) and the personae in some of the most memorable poems are leaders. Just as the "innocent" character appears as a constant fixture in Melville's thought throughout his career, so does the leader. The last chapter of this study will summarize the various influences that went into Melville's creation of his final leader, Captain Vere.

In his writings, Melville's concern with leaders and leadership begins as early as his concern for followers, but his sympathy for leaders is expressed more clearly later in his career. This

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[6] Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1947), pp. 59 ff.

change reflects many things, not the least of which is the shift in intellectual interests noted by Leon Howard:

> [T]he problem that bothered Melville in Billy Budd was not the problem of knowledge that had worried him in his youth. It was the problem of man. Is he a social being, responsible to the welfare of the society to which he belongs? Or is he an independent moral individual, responsible to his private awareness of guilt and innocence?[7]

The two problems are not mutually exclusive, and I will emphasize that Melville was always concerned about the social problem of man's relationship to man. Many studies have focused on his followers and their rebellions, and some of them will be mentioned shortly. By focusing on the leaders, I can show that even while the narrators are recounting their desertions and mutinies, Melville is concerned with identifying the type of leader that would make those acts unnecessary.

That desire to delineate a good leader is an important mark of Melville's conservatism. "Conservatism" is not necessarily restricted to politics and specific creeds, and a broad definition of the term is most useful. The words of politics are dangerous if applied too rigorously. For one thing, "conservative" and its most usual opposite, "liberal," and other words that are coined to describe political phenomena frequently shift in meaning. In the introduction to his Herman Melville, one can note the precision with which Richard Chase explains the distinctions between "liberal" and "progressive," but a historical perspective is now necessary to understand why he thought it was such a major concern. Also, the definitions he gave to "liberal" in 1949, including a freedom from "dogma and

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[7]Leon Howard, Herman Melville, Univ. of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 13 (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1961), p. 44.

absolutism," would have to be stretched somewhat to apply to the "liberals" of the 1960's who united to protest the Vietnam war. Likewise, one notes that "conservatives," who at the time Chase wrote his work were against foreign intervention, wound up defending that war. Chase made his definition of "liberal" broad enough to include conservative tendencies, and it is still of interest because it suggests one way of reconciling what seem to be opposing attitudes in Melville. Chase said:

> [Liberal] means a kind of thought which cherishes freedom and is free, free of dogma and absolutism; a kind of thought which is bounteous, in the sense that it is open-minded, skeptical, and humanist. Thus it is a large term, for one may remain a liberal and be more or less conservative in one's particular opinions, or more or less religious.[8]

Chase is defining a mental attitude or temperament, and in his preface he states that he does not wish to present Melville as primarily a political thinker.[9] But when he begins to discuss the poetry, he introduces it this way:

> Melville's ardent, heroic republicanism had always had a conservative streak. His search for the father (which took a political character in his reverence for the founders of the Republic), his admiration for old, landed families like the Glendinnings, his perception of the necessity of law--these attest to his conservatism.[10]

This explanation of Melville's conservatism is fairly adequate although the last instance of it is the one most central to this study.

A more recent discussion of Melville's conservatism, and one

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[8]Richard Chase, Herman Melville: A Critical Study (New York: Hafner, 1949), p. vi.

[9]Chase, p. vii.

[10]Chase, pp. 230-31.

which expands our understanding of it by relating it to classicism, is found in Milton R. Stern's edition of Billy Budd:

> When divisions and subdivisions of social and political theory are categorized, they seem to indicate always two major and opposed definitions--consciously or unconsciously assumed--of the human being and human potential. In topical terms one may classify these tendencies as the "left" and the "right." But these terms, like "conservative" and "radical," like "revolutionary" or "reactionary," become necessarily less useful as they must be redefined in terms of particular people and particular issues at particular times. Perhaps the most useful terms have been supplied by a "conservative"--to use the traditional term for the moment--T. E. Hulme. In his famous and influential essay, "Romanticism and Classicism," Hulme defines the romantic impulse as a belief in inexhaustible human potential and, therefore, in individual liberty and in endless and perfectibilitarian change. He defines the classicist impulse as a belief in the limited nature of human potential and the fallen nature of man and, therefore, in control and decorum and in the illusory quality of change and perfectibility. It seems to me that when all is said and done these opposing tendencies define the continuing dialectic between left and right, between radical and conservative, and inform the topical allegiances of particular people in particular issues at particular times most deeply, beneath the considerable and vastly important particularities of selfish and private involvements.[11]

The italics are mine. The concept of "the fallen nature of man" and a recognition of the "illusory quality of change and perfectibility" probably contribute equally as the roots of Melville's conservative tendencies. William Gilman discusses the idea that the gloom of Calvinism was not the predominating influence in the Alan Melville household.[12] Still, that "fallen nature" is central to orthodox Christianity, and the Calvinist outlook was always around Melville. The Gansevoort side of the family belonged to the Dutch

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[11]Milton R. Stern, ed., Intro., Billy Budd by Herman Melville (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), pp. xx-xxi.

[12]William H. Gilman, Melville's Early Life and "Redburn" (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 21 ff.

Reformed Church. In addition, Alan Melville and his family attended the local Dutch Church after 1824, even though Alan and Maria taught their children a more Unitarian view of God. Gilman says: "The God of the minister may have stood for Calvin's inexorable justice, but the God of Melville's parents . . . was above all else merciful."[13] The latter outlook probably received a severe jolt when Alan Melville suddenly died in 1832.

Richard Chase says, "To anyone studying Melville's work as a meaningful totality, the death of Melville's father will gradually appear to be the event with which one must begin."[14] Chase, of course, develops the idea of the search for the father as a major theme in Melville's writings. In his recent biography of Melville, Edwin H. Miller does the same,[15] and the father as authority figure has some obvious parallels to this study of leaders. For my purposes, however, I think it is reasonable to suggest that the event created in the twelve-year-old Melville a dislike of radical change. Gilman summarized the impact:

> It must . . . have robbed him of some of the sense of security that is important to the psychological health of a growing boy. It is certain that it changed the entire course of his existence, throwing him out into the world at a tender age to contribute to his support and substituting for the schoolboy's routine of books and classes, of jocund friendships and play, the young clerk's servitude to ledgers.[16]

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[13]Gilman, p. 27.

[14]Chase, p. 2.

[15]Edwin Haviland Miller, Melville (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1975).

[16]Gilman, pp. 60-61.

This experience with rapid change was not a happy one, and it certainly did nothing to "perfect" Melville's situation.

A strong awareness of man's fallen nature and a dislike of revolutionary change is constant in Melville's writings from beginning to end. These perceptions will be mentioned frequently in this study because, as noted in the quotation from Stern, they are closely related to the idea of control. In the social theme, control means law and government; government means division of the populace into those governed and those who govern--into followers and leaders.

This stress on the importance to Melville of laws and leadership is not meant as a denial of the rebelliousness of his early protagonists and the democratic emphasis in his early works. But other critics have already explored those facets of Melville's writings. Some of their conclusions prompted this study of Melville's conern with leaders and the conservative implications of this interest.

While Melville is clearly anti-authoritarian, he is not anti-authority. This may at first appear to be a distinction without a difference, but it is an essential part of Melville's social thinking. In other words, Melville always challenges abuses of authority but he never challenges the necessity of having authority. At the heart of this distinction is the necessity for good leaders to properly administer good laws. While Melville is consistently against the abuse of authority, he never advocates anarchy. The necessity of law and order is a given in Melville's appraisal of the world, especially the nautical world which is the setting for his first six books. His young narrators who put themselves outside the law apologize for

doing so. His one character who puts himself above all laws destroys himself and all around him (save one). These examples and many others can be grouped together to form a body of evidence for Melville's early conservatism.

In Melville criticism, the issue of his conservatism is usually focused on Vere's role in Billy Budd. Knowledge of the controversy over this role is essential to appreciating this study, and I will trace it briefly. The early position is best highlighted by E. L. Grant Watson's 1933 article which provided the phrase, "testament of acceptance." Watson treats Vere as a good man and argues that Melville's philosophy "has grown from that of rebellion to that of acceptance. . . ."[17] The opposing argument first appears in Joseph Schiffman's article, "Melville's Final Stage, Irony."[18] The epitome of what has become known as the ironist school of criticism is Lawrance Thompson's Melville's Quarrel with God. The gist of this argument is that Melville said one thing but meant another. Thus, Billy, in his innocence, can mean it when he says, "God bless Captain Vere," but Melville, in his bitter experience, is actually damning Vere and all the established, artificial order he represents. Thompson concludes that "Claggart and Vere do indeed share the infamy and depravity. . . ."[19] Then he says:

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[17]E. L. Grant Watson, "Melville's Testament of Acceptance," New England Quarterly 6 (June, 1933), pp. 319-27; rpt. in Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Billy Budd", ed. Howard P. Vincent (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 14.

[18]Joseph Schiffman, "Melville's Final Stage, Irony: A Re-Examination of Billy Budd Criticism," American Literature 22 (May, 1950), 129-36.

[19]Lawrance Thompson, Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1952), p. 413.

> In conclusion, we may ask again how it is possible that anyone who has read Billy Budd carefully could ever describe it as Melville's "Testament of Acceptance." But we know the answer to that: Melville cunningly arranged to have certain kinds of readers arrive at exactly that mistaken interpretation.[20]

Thompson's kind of "deep reading," which inverted the ostensible meaning, brought forth attempts to reconcile the opposing arguments, notably Richard H. Fogle's "Billy Budd--Acceptance or Irony." Fogle says that both exist in the story but stresses that the irony is the kind related to classical tragedy rather than black comedy. In his view, Vere and Billy are paired as good men.[21]

The stress of the ironist critics upon Melville's rebelliousness and anti-authoritarian attitude spawned many studies which attempted to interpret Melville solely in this light. The two works I am going to cite are excellent examples of this approach. Both of them address many of the same leadership situations that I am going to cover, but they focus on the followers. Coming to conclusions very different from my own, these works have provided motivation for this study and have helped me to define my own positions.

First is John Bernstein's Pacifism and Rebellion in the Writings of Herman Melville. Bernstein traces a line from Tommo's desertion (which he calls an "escape")[22] from the Dolly to Vere's

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[20]Thompson, p. 413.

[21]Richard Harter Fogle, "Billy Budd--Acceptance or Irony," Tulane Studies in English 8 (1958), 107-13; rpt. in Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Billy Budd", ed. Howard P. Vincent (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 42.

[22]John Bernstein, Pacifism and Rebellion in the Writings of Herman Melville (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964), p. 17.

being killed by the Athee. He concludes his chapter on Billy Budd and his book this way:

> This ship, obviously symbolic of the French Revolution, is the only force in Billy Budd to openly combat tyranny. Melville's ultimate position is that rebellion, a combination of social and spiritual protest, is the only power which may eventually liberate mankind and bring dignity into the lives of all men. . . . And, what is perhaps the keynote to Melville as a writer and as a thinker, is his insistence that mankind is never more noble than in this struggle against injustice, both human and universal, that by rebelling against evil, man can wrest meaning from the cosmos and in this struggle find some sort of salvation.[23]

Bernstein's interpretation of the Athee differs greatly from mine. The Athee's defeat, and its name, would seem to be valid enough qualifiers to question whether Melville's "ultimate position" was rebellion. It is also a sign of Vere's good leadership that his crew is so well trained that they can complete the mission without him. While I agree with the basic idea that man can be ennobled by struggling against injustice, it seems highly irresponsible to suggest that any and every kind of rebellion, such as terrorism, is ennobling. The suggestion also seems to counter the attitude in many of Melville's later works, such as "The House Top" (a poem which Bernstein does not discuss).

The second example of perceiving Melville's early anti-authoritarianism and then over-stressing it in his later works is Ray B. Browne's Melville's Drive to Humanism (1971). In my efforts to show Melville's conservatism, I do not claim that Melville abandons his sympathy for the oppressed. I will try to show that he does extend it to the decent people who try to uphold the laws. In this

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[23]Bernstein, pp. 220-21.

sense, one aspect of my thesis is simply that Melville's humanism enlarges to embrace more of humanity, especially Captain Vere. Browne reaches the opposite conclusion:

> The death of Vere is his complete dissolution and dismissal. . . . In the official report of the case, the last chapter but one in the book, Melville gives a "factual" and "true" report. It is, of course, a gross mis-statement of truth. It reports that Budd was actually guilty, that Claggart was an honorable and worthy individual. But Vere is not mentioned. . . . Melville's intent is clear. The report mentions Vere only in the generalized term "the captain." His personality has been lost. In the chronicle of human events, Melville is saying, such a man does not deserve even being named.[24]

Browne's insistence that Melville most clearly shows his humanism by destroying a decent and thoughtful man like Vere does not make any sense except in the context of a fervid anti-authoritarian bias on the part of the critic. Browne's conclusions will be addressed more directly in the chapter on Billy Budd.

Scattered in and around the critical opinions I have mentioned are others which say or suggest important things about Melville's conservatism. One of the most important is Milton R. Stern's The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, a study of naturalism in Melville's writings. Most of my opinions on Billy Budd were formed before I had read Stern, but his chapter on that story would almost suffice to conclude this study. For example, his opening remarks on Billy Budd are:

> Morally, philosophically, emotionally, socially, Melville's search for the complete man is not the search for the knightly hero, but for the Governor. The Governor must repress man's

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[24]Ray B. Browne, Melville's Drive to Humanism (Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue Univ. Studies, 1971), p. 392.

> anarchic atheism and must reorient man's frantic activities.[25]

The idea of necessity of control appears throughout the chapter:

> Melville's political classicism cannot possibly be construed as totalitarianism. Vere, it is stated, does not maintain order for its own sake. Vere sees order as necessary for a reconciliation of opposites and a suppression of chaos-bringing disruption.[26]

Stern even mentions Vere's leadership:

> Because Vere is not primarily concerned with self, he knows when and how to delegate authority. . . . He must bear within himself all the tortures of choice and yet present to the ship's people a demeanor of calm decision. His focal realization is that as he goes, so goes the world--always, though, within the moment of history which shapes him. The cost, to the leader, of proper leadership is a frightful one, for the administrator must be all work and no play.[27]

Almost twenty years after he wrote this, Stern summarized his chapter on Billy Budd this way:

> [It] argued that although Melville was indeed bitterly angry about the implications within his materials, nevertheless he was sympathetic to Vere in the role the Captain had to play.[28]

My reservation about Stern's analysis of Billy Budd is, of course, whether Melville was really "bitterly angry" about the conservative implications of what he wrote. In the introduction to his new (1975) edition of Billy Budd, Stern re-evaluates the work in view of the classicism Melville expresses in his poetry. He concludes, from the consistency with which Melville expresses his conservative classicism

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[25]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1957), p. 206.

[26]Stern, Steel, p. 210.

[27]Stern, Steel, p. 226.

[28]Stern, Intro., Billy Budd, p. xiii.

over the last twenty-five years of his life, that Melville was sympathetic to both Vere and the order and restraint Vere represents.

The most recent critical expression I have found on Melville's attitude towards Vere is in a 1978 book by a well-known Melville scholar:

> Much of the criticism of Billy Budd had consisted of a debate about Captain Vere, as if the key issue of the story were to decide whether Melville was condemning or approving his action. I am not going to restate the correct side of this argument, which many students of Melville have set forth, for there is overwhelming evidence in the story, and throughout Melville's other works, that Vere stands for all Melville found most detestable, inhuman, and menacing: arbitrary authority; oppression; military tyranny; legalism; the officer class and its support of war; hypocrisy; loyalty to kings and empire; legalized murder; disregard of nature, the human heart, and the dictates of conscience.
>
> The real issue about Vere is not whether he is right or wrong, but whether he is sane or mad. . . .
>
> What are we to make of the fact that to some academics Captain Vere seems a good man, an admirable man?[29]

The debate goes on. The intense arguments of those who stress Melville's anti-authoritarianism can best be understood by the following observations--one on American literature in general and the other on Melville criticism in particular.

The bias of American literature against conservatism is discussed by Henry Bamford Parkes in "Freedom and Order in Western Literature":

> Conservatism, though still a powerful force in politics and never lacking in intellectual support has been definitely a minority movement among writers and artists. Dante's vision of an orderly universe and Shakespeare's support of an orderly society have lost their appeal.
>
> This has been particularly true of the literature of the

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[29] H. Bruce Franklin, The Victim as Criminal and Artist: Literature From the American Prison (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 68-69.

> United States, which has always been sympathetic to the Left. American conservatives have either been statesmen and jurists, like Alexander Hamilton and John Marshall, or like Henry Adams and T. S. Eliot have turned for the realization of their ideals to medieval Europe. The American dream has always idealized the individual and insisted on his natural goodness, evil being a product of social organizations. Somewhat inconsistently, American liberals--like Thomas Jefferson--have attributed this evil to the machinations of kings, priests and aristocrats, who, for some reason that is never explained, have not shared in man's natural goodness.[30]

In the early works, Melville appeals to "liberal" commentators by his attacks on the evils of social organizations, usually represented by self-righteous missionaries or tyrannical ship captains. And surely his appeal in this direction is reinforced by the fact that his young protagonists (who are projections of himself) are "naturally good" people.

But Melville did not believe in the natural goodness of mankind. He constantly refers to the evil in man, and I will be noting this in the next two chapters. Readers should discern the crucial fact that every protagonist considers himself superior to the rest of the crew. Only Ishmael professes complete brotherhood with his shipmates, but he, too, separates himself from his crew by disavowing Ahab's mission--the most important, even if not the most dramatic, action in Moby-Dick. In these early books, the elitism of the protagonists and their friends and Melville's tentative search for a "good" leader provide a focus for many of the conservative tendencies

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[30]Henry Bamford Parkes, "Freedom and Order in Western Literature," Denver Quarterly, No. 4 (Summer, 1969), pp. 14-15. For a different interpretation of conservatism in America, see Allen Guttman's The Conservative Tradition in America (1967). He contends that the conservative influence in politics is practically non-existent and that "Conservatism has persisted in America as an essentially literary phenomenon" (p. 11).

that are more evident later on.

Melville criticism is also biased against conservatism. But once Melville's early conservative tendencies are as evident as his anti-authoritarianism, it will be easier to defend moderate interpretations of Melville's social thought. One goal of this study is to make those tendencies more readily apparent. Stern discusses the bias of Melville criticism:

> [O]nce a critical perception discerns a major and lasting dissenting and iconoclastic bent in a writer, it is difficult to see his works as conservative even though classicist elements are also discernible in the same body of work. Melville was both radical and conservative; in matters of religious belief, although he was strongly attracted to the idea of original sin as a profound metaphor for the reality of human existence, he remained to the end crusty, defiant, and humorously iconoclastic about religious orthodoxy. In matters of political philosophy that very same sense of original sin fed his classicism--a sense that had long been developing in Melville's writing and that has been common to most American conservative theoreticians from John Adams and Alexander Hamilton to the present day. Although one can point out, and rightly, the differences between the egalitarian romanticism in Moby-Dick and the strong classicism in the poetry, it is important to note that the classicist impulse had always been present in Melville's vision, side by side with the earlier romantic lyricism, and had often found expression as it had in Melville's celebration of Hawthorne's saying "No! in thunder" to the optimistic American theories of human perfectibility.[31]

The italics are mine. Stress on the early conservatism should not only lead to more moderate critical interpretations, it will provide a valid basis for discussing the continuity of Melville's canon.

Some of the readings I have cited trace the continuity of Melville's rebellious attitudes. Through this study of Melville's leaders I will trace the continuity of his conservative tendencies. In The Ironic Diagram, John Seelye offers a valid warning that

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[31]Stern, Intro., Billy Budd, pp. xli-xlii.

deriving consistency from Melville's writings is to impose it on them.[32] So, I would emphasize that this study stresses continuity of treatment rather than consistency of attitude. Each of Melville's leaders is a different character in a different setting, and Melville significantly varies his presentation and development of these characters. While there is continuity deriving from the fact that Melville's best works involve leadership situations, his attitude towards the role of the leader and the questions this role poses must be evaluated in context.

This context is realistic in that it most frequently represents men in ships with specific problems that might be encountered on any real ship. True, in Moby-Dick Melville's genius transforms the physical into the metaphysical, but Moby-Dick shares with the other sea stories a solid grounding in reality. Captain Ahab shares with Captain Vangs and Captain Vere similar problems in simply running the ship. Showing us how and why the captains tackle these leadership problems is a major technique in Melville's characterization.

After Moby-Dick and Pierre, there is a schism in Melville's career created by his turning to other genres and by a mellowing of his characters. This disruption of continuity has been noted by many commentators, perhaps most succinctly by Charles Olson who said, "After Ahab his men decline."[33] Olson's comment was a lament for what he saw as a decline in Melville's creative power. Melville created

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[32]John Seelye, Melville: The Ironic Diagram (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), p. 2.

[33]Olson, p. 104.

one more ultimate quester in Pierre, but the result was disastrous. One lesson that Ishmael reveals in the telling of Ahab's story is that Ahab's way was a magnificent but wasteful gesture that led to death and destruction. Ishmael's commentary shows that the meaning of life is found in one's ties to humanity. Instead of a life of feverish isolation, one should live with a lowered "conceit of attainable felicity."[34] Whether or not it is a decline, Melville's characters after Ahab and Pierre are more realistic.

The general perception of Ahab rightly distinguishes him from Melville's other characters because of his Promethean defiance. In this study, however, I will stress his role as leader rather than his relation to Prometheus. Readers should realize that Ahab's identification with Prometheus is based on the realistic presentation of his command position. His freedom to act stems from his supreme authority, and it is through his acts of leadership that Melville shows us Ahab's superior intelligence and his fatal pride.

Evaluating the Promethean aspects of Melville's most fascinating character provides rich insights into Melville's artistry and his meanings. Trying to discern Promethean aspects of his other characters can raise some problems and can exaggerate the seeming discontinuity of Melville's career in the early 1850's.

The remarks of two commentators who have studied Promethean influence on Melville reveal these problems. In Herman Melville, Richard Chase observes that "in Melville's later works we find him seeking for a revised Promethean humanism, a meaningful vision of

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[34]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Harrison Hayford and Herschel Parker (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 349.

life at a lower level of ecstasy than that which inspirits Moby-Dick and Pierre."[35] In tracing the development of the defiant hero in Melville's first six or seven novels, Chase uses a terminology based on the Promethean myth that is not so applicable to the later works. Prometheus had a concern for humanity, it is true, but many men and gods share that concern. Prometheus is memorable because of his defiance. While I think Chase's terminology is somewhat awkward, I whole-heartedly agree with his perception of Melville's increasing interest in things human. Melville becomes more interested in the limits of men as men. If this is a "decline," as Olson says, it is from the romantic conception of great men in improbable actions to a realistic one of real men, with their individual shortcomings, facing possible problems: Captain Delano confronting (finally) a mutiny, or a lawyer concerned about his strange employee. In the mid-1850's, Melville begins looking for a humanly possible humanism.

There are dangers in over-interpreting the god-like references Melville gives some of his characters. In "The Hero and the Heroic in American Literature," William H. Gilman comments on this problem: "A whole body of criticism has grown up which attempts to make Americans heroes by making them gods and eliminating through reductive generalization the very things which make them distinctive."[36] For example, Chase says, "Jack Chase . . . was a prototype of what Melville envisioned as the full, heroic Promethean-Oedipaen

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[35]Chase, p. 242.

[36]William H. Gilman, "The Hero and the Heroic in American Literature: An Essay in Definition," in Patterns of Commitment in American Literature, ed. Marston La France (Toronto: Carleton and the Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 3.

personality." He soon concludes the "Jack Chase was the young man as Promethean hero."[37] In terms of Chase's thesis, this is a fair statement, but it does not really illuminate Jack Chase, especially as we see him on the Neversink. In Progress Into Silence: A Study of Melville's Heroes (1970), Alan Lebowitz challenges Chase on this same point during a discussion of White-Jacket:

> Melville's new, apparently optimistic viewpoint is no lie, however, but rather a tentative, almost wistful yearning to say yes against all the logic of his senses and his mind. Jack Chase . . . is neither heroic nor even very useful, but merely one admirable man in a very bad world. That he lacks both stature and substance would seem clear enough and no matter of concern, were it not for interpretive views like that of Richard Chase which posit him as Melville's explicit moral alternative to Ahab, as, in Richard Chase's term, a "true Prometheus, a genuine savior, not a spurious one."[38]

Lebowitz then describes Jack Chase in the context of the story:

> As a Prometheus, Chase's sole action for the general benefit of his fellows consists of his flattering the commodore into granting them all a day's shore leave. Confronted with a major challenge, the general order for "the great massacre of the beards," he fails rather markedly. Though he is initially furious and vows defiance, prudence quickly prevails: "In his cooler moments, Jack was a wise man; he at last deemed it wisdom to succumb."[39]

While there is no doubt that Jack Chase made a good and long-lasting impression on Melville, Lebowitz's statement seems to be a needed corrective on the dangers of making a man a god. In this study, I try to avoid detaching the character from the setting. The characters I will describe take their importance from a specific context where their leadership (or lack of it) is specifically described.

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[37] Chase, pp. 23-24.

[38] Alan Lebowitz, Progress Into Silence: A Study of Melville's Heroes (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1970), p. 122.

[39] Lebowitz, p. 123.

Lebowitz's subtitle stresses "heroes," and he, too, gets trapped by the "Promethean" terminology. In stating the limits of his own work, he implies that he has covered all of Melville's important writing:

> I have confined my study exclusively to the nine novels and, furthermore, to what seems to me their central, dominant concern, the complex relation between the Promethean hero and the young aspiring neophyte who gains important education from him. Essentially, Melville had only the two characters, Ishmael and Ahab, and only the one story. When that story gives out and the characters disappear--the younger into disillusionment, the older into an oblivion of history and dream--the fiction-writing stops.[40]

If one is willing to ignore Billy Budd, Lebowitz's theory is brilliant. He discusses the nine novels as three triads: the first of each triad (Typee, Redburn, and Pierre) centers on a voyage out, the second (Omoo, White-Jacket, and Israel Potter) on a voyage home, and the third work in each triad (Mardi, Moby-Dick, and The Confidence-Man) is a synthesis of the previous two. One could question whether Billy Budd is on a voyage out, but Lebowitz dismisses it with this refreshing, if inaccurate, comment:

> Billy Budd, the product of his final, curious urge to write fiction, is comparably ambitious, but less impressive, I think, than either "Bartleby the Scrivener" or "Benito Cereno." The extraordinary amount of critical attention paid to it seems to me excessive, though natural enough, considering the drama of its creation and discovery as well as its innate appeal to those who would see in it a kind of final testament. But whatever its virtues, Billy Budd is surely no comprehensive statement of belief, and it offers no special insights into either the earlier work or the later life.[41]

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[40] Lebowitz, pp. ix-x.

[41] Lebowitz, pp. 233-34.

Billy Budd, obviously, does not fit into the thesis of Lebowitz's excellent work. In this study of leadership, however, it is the capstone of what I see as one of Melville's lifelong concerns, and it is especially relevant in illuminating the conservative, classical bent of Melville's mind.

Lebowitz also comments on the "decline" after Ahab. He says of Pierre, "The Promethean hero now lives and functions within the society he must by definition shun."[42] He elaborates:

> In Pierre the psychological turmoils finally surface, revealing themselves with an awful clarity. The spirit of the sub-sub-librarian, chronicling the deeds of larger men, turns sourly self-contemptuous, even anti-literary. And feeding and shaping the inchoate despairs, there emerges a new intellectual decisiveness, not about the Promethean hero--good or bad--but about his uselessness in an increasingly nonheroic world.[43]

I will discuss Melville's distrust of the "hero" in Chapter II. For the moment, though, notice that Lebowitz's last comment also points to Melville's concern with human possibilities in the real world.

Chase's unfortunate terminology, Lebowitz's underestimation of the importance of Melville's later writings, and the very useful insights of both men all stem from their focus on the Prometheus myth. Melville deliberately uses that story of defiance to help delineate some of his characters, and I do not want to underestimate its importance. The Prometheus myth as a common denominator of Melville's characters, however, becomes very limited after Pierre. I think focusing on leadership, while it also has its limitations, provides

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[42]Lebowitz, p. 153.

[43]Lebowitz, p. 148.

a broader spectrum for discussing Melville's canon.

In introducing this study of Melville's concern with leadership and its relation to his conservative attitudes, I have brought in the idea of continuity, not with the thought that it is a good in itself, but to suggest that there may be more continuity in Melville's writings than is now generally recognized. Focusing on Melville's rebellious attitudes seems to emphasize the differences of the two "parts" of the canon because Melville is not so actively or obviously rebellious in the shorter prose and the poetry. On the opposite side of the social theme, Melville's conservative attitudes in the later writings have been receiving more attention. I think, however, that the presence of these attitudes in his early work is underestimated and needs to be explored.

Throughout this introduction I have tried to avoid oversimplifying my thesis. There is a great temptation to call it "Melville's search for the good leader." Stern's idea that Melville's search for the complete man results in a governor rather than a hero is a valid one, but I have reservations about the word "search." It implies a conscious and consistent effort to find something, and tracing consistency over a forty-five year period leads to distortions. There is, however, some continuity in this "search." Whenever Melville portrays a leader, he directly or indirectly explores the idea of governing. With varying degrees of intensity, Melville's interest in leadership appears from 1846 to 1891; in the first three books it seems valid to say that he is searching for the qualities that make a great leader.

## CHAPTER ONE: BALANCING THE HEAD AND HEART

Although Melville seems to be constantly quarreling with authority in his early works, a close examination of Typee, Omoo, and Mardi reveals an abundance of material to counter that perception. Very few of Melville's designated leaders are unmitigated tyrants, which suggests some moderation in his views on authority. Moreover, each of his protagonists temporarily becomes a leader, which suggests Melville's awareness of the need to combine freedom and initiative with order and discipline. In addition, Melville's extensive concern with leadership also reflects his interest in law and order because each involves the control or regulation of human activities. A comparison of the first three books with the next three and a look at the concept of the "implied author" will provide the necessary background for discussing Melville's three main types of leaders: the ship captains, the political leaders, and the protagonists who become leaders. This examination of Melville's interest in leadership and the good leader should provide a basis for moderating some critics' over-emphasis on his rebelliousness. Even in these early works, Melville presents a viewpoint balanced between the necessity of authority and the necessity to evade or correct its abuse.

The first three books form a "natural" unit in this study because of their similarities in treating leadership. They also have distinct differences from the next three novels (Redburn, White-Jacket, and Moby-Dick). Obviously, all six books have certain things in

common: setting, ship captains, and protagonists (the "chief" characters) who narrate in the first person. The physical setting of each involves the sea and ships. The hierarchial nature of shipboard life results in the captain's actions directly affecting the protagonist. And, except for Moby-Dick, each story is told by a narrator who feels superior to the majority of the crew. Even in Moby-Dick, Ishmael achieves a superiority over his shipmates by repudiating Ahab's quest.

The differences between the first three books and the next three proceed from Melville's treatment of these same common factors. The settings of the first books are primarily on land. Each of these books has a physical movement from sea to land and back to the sea. Melville's main purpose is to describe what he has seen in Typee, around Tahiti, and in the island "world" of Mardi. Each story ends when the protagonist returns to the sea. In contrast, the next three books have a physical movement from land to sea and, in varying degrees, a return toward the land. Except for Redburn's sojourn in Liverpool, the main action of each takes place on board a ship at sea. On one level, Melville's purpose is to describe the life he has seen on a merchant ship, on a man-of-war, and on a whaler. Of course, White-Jacket and Moby-Dick are each more symbolic than the story preceding it, and in each Melville enlarges his purpose beyond literal description.

Melville's depiction of leaders in the first three books differs from that in the next three, a fact that is at least partially related to the settings. The captains in the latter group (Riga of the Highlander in Redburn, Claret of the Neversink in White-Jacket,

and Ahab of the Pequod in Moby-Dick) are all unquestionably authoritarian and sometimes verge on the tyrannical. Melville gives these captains extended treatment partly because they dominate the physical setting for the majority of each story. Although the leadership of Claret and Ahab is challenged, each of these three stories focuses on only one main leader.

In the first three books, however, Melville's concern with leadership is more varied. There are three main groups of leaders: ship captains, political leaders, and the protagonists. Here, Melville's captains only influence the action initiating the main story. These captains (Vangs of the Dolly in Typee, Guy of the Julia in Omoo, and the nameless captain of the Arcturion in Mardi) are respectively presented as tyrannical, incompetent, and good. This variety is one important facet of Melville's early treatment of leadership. The political leaders whom Melville describes at length are Mehevi, king of the Typees, and Media, a demi-god king of Odo, one of the islands in Mardi. The treatment of these two characters helps establish Melville's idea of a good leader.

The third group of leaders is unique in Melville's canon. The most interesting and most significant example of Melville's early concern with leadership is the development of each protagonist-narrator into a leader. This fact provides a striking contrast with the next triad of books where the narrators are constantly subjugated to the authority of the captains and never experience the responsibility of leadership.

The development of the protagonists as leaders needs to be discussed by itself. After tracing Melville's treatment of ship

captains and political leaders through the first three novels, I will go back to Typee and trace his treatment of the young protagonists as leaders. While the method will involve some repetition, it is the best way to isolate this almost unnoticed phenomenon. Melville's handling of the obvious authority figures tends to support his anti-authoritarian reputation: most of his leaders lack heart. But, Melville's development of the protagonists as leaders is just the opposite: they have heart but need to develop qualities of the head--especially Taji, who has to become a disciplinarian. Even in these early works, Melville has a more balanced attitude toward authority than many people give him credit for.

In summary, then, these comparisons provide an overview of Melville's interest in leadership and how he develops that interest. The first books probe many aspects of leadership and seem to search for a good leader. This search is particularly evident in Mardi where the first half recounts Taji's becoming a leader and the second half focuses on the humanizing of a king. The next three books emphasize the actions of more or less tyrannical captains. This emphasis seems to suggest that Melville was disillusioned about the prospects of finding the type of leader he wanted. In all six of these books, however, the narrators comment on the quality of leadership they encounter. With increasing frequency they mention the apparent motivation behind the leader's acts; whether praising or condemning those acts, the narrators all seem to have a standard of measurement--some concept of an ideal leader.

This standard ultimately resides in Melville's mind, but it may be easier to perceive it and its relationship to Melville's

conservative tendencies by thinking of the standard as one of the social norms of the "implied author." This term is used by Wayne Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction to distinguish between the writer that we imagine we know from reading his works and the real man that we do not in actuality know at all. Booth says: "The 'implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man: he is the sum of his own choices."[1] So, when a writer chooses over and over again to present leadership situations and to describe or infer a standard of good leadership, we can determine that one of the major concerns of the implied author is the proper relationship between men when one has significant authority over another.

The implied author is an abstract concept which helps us to a better understanding of both the narrator and the real author. As Booth says, the narrator is reliable if he speaks or acts in accordance with the implied author's norms.[2] In Melville's early writings, the narrator and the implied author share similar attitudes toward the problems of leadership. They both abhor tyrannical rulers, and they both recognize a need for law and order. An example of the latter is the fact that each narrator in the first three books apologizes for breaking the law. These apologies do not stop the young protagonists from doing what they believe they must, but the thought behind the apologies shows a respect for law. The fact that this scene is found in three consecutive books also suggests that the

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[1]Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 74-75.

[2]Booth, p. 158.

real author was somewhat disturbed by his protagonists becoming outlaws. Establishing that these early narrators reliably report not only their rebellious attitudes but also their interest in good leadership helps us to understand the breadth of Melville's social views.

The relationship between the implied author and the real Melville leads to a clearer understanding of Melville's early conservatism. Melville's own adventures are so clearly the basis for the plots of his novels that many people assume that there is very little distance between the first-person narrator and Melville himself--in other words, that Melville was writing autobiography. It is very easy (and correct) to perceive Melville's sympathy for the young rebels who more or less reenact his own history. It is not so easy to see any conservative sentiments in those portrayals. But, as many critics have shown, Melville does put a distance between his personal history and his art.[3] By focusing on the implied author, both this distance and the conservative tendencies become more apparent. In Typee, for example, the implied author chooses to have the narrator not only desert the Dolly, but also explain why Vangs was a bad leader, question how the Typees are governed, and defend Lord George Paulet's temporary reign in Honolulu. All of these important examples have at their heart an awareness of the necessity of authority and

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[3]The following are standard works which illuminate the differences between Melville's fiction and his years in the Pacific: Charles R. Anderson, Melville in the South Seas (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949); William H. Gilman, Melville's Early Life and "Redburn" (New York: New York University Press, 1951); and Howard P. Vincent, The Tailoring of Melville's White-Jacket" (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970).

the desirability of good leaders to administer that authority. By perceiving an implied author between Melville and his protagonists, it is easier to see that Melville was not only emotionally involved with the well-being of his chief characters, but he was also intellectually concerned with the bad leadership that threatened these characters.

This brief overview of trends in Melville's first six works and of the importance of the "implied author" provides sufficient background to begin discussing Melville's leaders. In each of the first three books, the protagonist deserts or mutinies in a reaction to his captain. The logical starting point, then, for a detailed look at Melville's ideas on leadership is with the ship captains.

## I

Melville has some concept of a good leader as early as Typee. It is partially revealed in his praise of Lord George Paulet, the British naval officer who took "control" of Hawaii in 1843. This praise appears in an appendix which accompanied both the original American and English editions.[4] Melville's ostensible reason for writing the appendix was to correct the "distorted accounts and fabrications" which the American press had published of Paulet's actions in Hawaii. As Melville explains it, Paulet had a commission from the British commander in the Pacific to make inquiries about the abuse of British residents in Honolulu. Paulet's attempts to do this were met with insolence by the "junto of ignorant and designing Methodist

[4]Like many passages that attacked the missionaries and stressed the licentiousness of the natives, this appendix did not appear in the next American edition.

elders in the councils of a half-civilized king."[5] When Paulet demanded compliance with his requests, the king gave to Paulet a "provisional cession" of the islands. The American press reacted to this British "imperialism" in a predictable fashion. Melville read these accounts when he returned to Boston less than a year after the events took place and thought the press had "grossly misrepresented" them. Paulet administered Hawaiian affairs from February to July, 1843, and Melville, who was in Honolulu from mid-May to mid-August of that year, wrote Paulet's defense as an "act of justice towards a gallant officer."

Two passages in particular reveal the rudiments of Melville's idea of a good leader. Melville writes that Paulet "entered upon the administration of Hawaiian affairs, in the same firm and benignant spirit which marked the discipline of his frigate, and which had rendered him the idol of his ship's company" (p. 256). Later he says, "The great body of the Hawaiian people invoke blessings on Paulet's head, and look back with gratitude to the time when his liberal and paternal sway diffused peace and happiness among them" (p. 258). The "firm and benignant spirit" and the "liberal and paternal sway" indicate a man who takes a balanced approach to life. The ideal leader both demands discipline and tolerates human error. He is concerned with mission and morale; but, he knows the mission must take priority or his people will not respect him.

Melville makes one striking comment on Paulet's actions and

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[5]Herman Melville, Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life, ed. Harrison Hayford, et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1968), p. 255. All further references to this work appear in the text.

the abuse he received for those actions:

> He is not the first man who, in the fearless discharge of his duty, has awakened the senseless clamors of those whose narrow-minded suspicions blind them to a proper appreciation of measures which unusual exigencies may have rendered necessary. (P. 258)

The passage conveys a sense of Melville's respect and sympathy for the leader who has to act under adverse conditions. This comment, in Melville's first novel, is striking for two reasons: (1) it flatly counters the image of Melville as a rebel against all authority, and (2) it applies with equal relevance to the last story Melville would write nearly forty-five years later.

The ideal of balance in the good leader is a crucial and consistent idea in Melville's writing. In White-Jacket Melville again stresses the idea: "One large brain and one large heart have virtue enough to magnetize a whole fleet or an army."[6] Melville does not elaborate on the symbolism of "brain" and "heart," but the common interpretations are sufficient. The brain, or "head," signifies intelligence, perception, wisdom, and competence; the "heart," courage, compassion, love, and tolerance. Or, as F. O. Matthiessen puts it in American Renaissance: "The great individual must possess a comprehensive knowledge . . . and a sympathy to match his knowledge."[7] Most of Melville's leaders are deficient in "sympathy" or

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[6]Herman Melville, White-Jacket: or The World in a Man-of-War, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 112.

[7]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941; rpt. in paperback, 1968), p. 380. The "head"-"heart" dichotomy was fairly standard in Melville's day. When Sophia Hawthorne wrote to her mother about Melville's review of Hawthorne in the Literary World, she said: "At last some one dares to say what in my secret

heart; some in both areas.

In Typee Melville depicts Captain Vangs's lack of heart. Vangs seems to have an adequate understanding of human nature, but he is neither tolerant nor compassionate. He is first mentioned in the third paragraph of the story as Tommo, the protagonist-narrator, humorously describes the fate of the sole remaining chicken:

> Who would believe that there could be any one so cruel as to long for the decapitation of the luckless Pedro; yet the sailors pray every minute, selfish fellows, that the miserable fowl may be brought to his end. They say the captain will never point the ship for the land so long as he has in anticipation a mess of fresh meat. (P. 4)

The last sentence contains an uncomplimentary hint of the captain's attitude towards the care of his men, but the indirectness of "they say" preserves the humorous vein.

The sharpest attack on Vangs's leadership occurs in Chapter 4 when Tommo explains his decision to "run away":

> In numberless instances had not only the implied but the specified conditions of the articles been violated on the part of the ship in which I served. The usage on board of her was tyrannical; the sick had been unhumanly neglected; the provisions had been doled out in scanty allowance; and her cruizes [sic] were unreasonably protracted. The captain was the author of these abuses; it was in vain to think that he would either remedy them, or alter his conduct, which was arbitrary and violent in the extreme. His prompt reply to all complaints and remonstrances was--the butt end of a hand-spike, so convincingly administered as effectively to silence the aggrieved party. (Pp. 20-21)

This assessment is dulled somewhat by the fact that we are told about, rather than shown, the tyranny. And while the narrator's

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mind I have often thought--that he is only to be mentioned with the Swan of Avon; the great heart and the grand intellect combined." This letter can be found in Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle by Eleanor Melville Metcalf (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 89-90.

reliability has been discussed, it is only fair to point out that he is rationalizing an upcoming action which he admits will appear "in no way flattering" to his character (p. 20). Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt Tommo's perception of these abuses. Vangs's leadership is bad enough to cause the protagonist to want to desert.

Two incidents show Vangs in action: one reveals his competency; the other, his problem in communicating. First, Vangs refuses to allow the drunken pilot to steer the Dolly into the bay at Nukeheva (p. 13). Later he "harangues" the crew about the dangers of taking liberty on an island full of cannibals. Both actions are prudent ones, and the speech itself seems to be delivered with a sense of humor, as this sample shows:

> "Now, men, as we are just off a six months' cruise, and have got through most of our work in port here, I suppose you want to go ashore. Well, I mean to give your watch liberty to-day, so you may get ready as soon as you please, and go; but understand this, I am going to give you liberty because I suppose you would growl like so many old quarter gunners if I didn't; at the same time, if you'll take my advice, every mother's son of you will stay aboard, keep out of the way of the bloody cannibals altogether." (P. 34)

Surely Vangs has his tongue in his cheek when he addresses his sailors in this manner, but the crew takes it seriously and, of course, rejects it. Perhaps attempting irony with this crew shows a lack of judgment, but in the brief glimpse we have of Vangs, he seems to have the head to be a leader. He just lacks heart.

With Tommo's desertion from the Dolly, Vangs's portrait is ended. He is a very minor character, and Melville clearly uses him as a foil to get his protagonist onto the island. Even in this brief portrait, though, Melville establishes that a man who does not take good care of his crew is a bad leader.

In Typee Tommo refers to tyrannical conditions, and then he deserts the ship in the sixth chapter. Omoo starts not with tyranny, but with incompetency, evolves into a mutiny, and the protagonist does not get on shore until the thirtieth chapter--about one third of the way through the book. The protagonist-narrator of this story is also a young sailor, and for clarity's sake I will call him "Omoo."[8] Omoo is subjected to bad leadership much longer than Tommo was; consequently, his story gives more insight into the problems of leadership.

In Omoo there are three ship captains to discuss. The French captain of the Reine Blanche can be quickly dismissed by noting that he stands in complete contrast to the leadership of Captain Guy. The Frenchman is "one of those horrid naval bores--a great disciplinarian."[9] He keeps his men exercising the sails in port and maneuvering with the boats. He also gives his men insufficient quantities of inadequate food and no grog. Omoo notes the "slovenly behavior" of the French sailors, and he says: "There was nothing of the national vivacity in their movements; nothing of the quick precision perceptible on the deck of a thoroughly disciplined armed vessel" (p. 101). Omoo attributes part of this to the fact that many of the men had been impressed and part to the leadership of the captain. Not until White-Jacket does Melville discuss how a leader creates a "thoroughly

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[8]Although the narrator is christened "Typee" by a shipmate at the end of Chapter 1, he never identifies himself. "Typee" would be too easily confused with the novel.

[9]Herman Melville, Omoo: A Narrative of Adventure in the South Seas, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1968), p. 110. All further references to this work appear in the text.

disciplined armed vessel" (which seems to be a good thing) without being a "great disciplinarian."

In contrast to the Reine Blanche, the Julia has no discipline, good or bad. Omoo makes that observation three times (pp. 13, 35, & 48). The source of this deficiency is Captain Guy who is described in the first chapter as a "young man, pale and slender, more like a sickly counting-house clerk than a bluff sea-captain" (p. 6). The striking simile introduces the disparaging tone of his whole portrait.

In the next paragraph, the captain charges the mate to take care of Omoo, and the narrator editorializes, "not, let it be borne in mind, that the captain felt any great compassion for me, he only desired to have the benefits of my services as soon as possible" (p. 6). Omoo indicates here that he has insight into the captain's mind, that he is omniscient. Unlike Tommo, who did not reveal any omniscience, Omoo frequently describes the motivation behind the acts of the leaders he observes. Of course, at this point there is no way for the reader to judge if the captain has any compassion for Omoo or not. Perhaps Omoo reveals his youthfulness in assuming that Guy could not be motivated by both a concern for his health and a concern for his services. In any case, Omoo's dislike of Guy is readily apparent.

Omoo quickly brings to light Guy's failings as a leader. In the second chapter we learn that twelve of the thirty-two original crew members have deserted, including all three junior mates and three of the four harpooners. Then Omoo reveals some damaging information about the captain and his relationship to Jermin, the chief mate:

> The captain was a young cockney, who, a few years before had emigrated to Australia, and, by some favoritism or other, had procured the command of the vessel, though in no wise competent. He was essentially a landsman, and though a man of education, no more meant for the sea than a hairdresser. . . . he left every thing to the chief mate, who, as the story went, had been given his captain in charge. Yet, despite his apparent unobtrusiveness, the silent captain had more to do with the men than they thought. In short, although one of your sheepish-looking fellows, he had a sort of still, timid cunning. . . . So the bluff mate, who always thought he did what he pleased, was occasionally made a tool of; . . . But, to all appearance, at least, the mate had every thing his own way; indeed, in most things this was actually the case; and it was quite plain that the captain stood in awe of him. (Pp. 10-11)

Omoo's perceptive probing of command relationships makes leadership a major theme for the first third of the story. We eventually learn that while Jermin is very competent, he lacks the head quality of perception which prevents his being a good leader. Omoo first describes him as a man who has a "heart as big as a bullock's," tends to drink too much, and when drunk, knocks the men down in a "good-natured way" (p. 11). Another passage on Jermin reveals Melville's serious interest in styles of leadership:

> The crews manning vessels like these [whalers] are for the most part villains of all nations and dyes; picked up in the lawless parts of the Spanish Main, and among the savages of the islands. Like galley-slaves they are only to be governed by scourges and chains. Their officers go among them with dirk and pistol--concealed, but ready at a grasp.
>
> Not a few of our own crew were men of this stamp; but, riotous at times as they were, the bluff, drunken energies of Jermin were just the thing to hold them in some sort of noisy subjection. Upon an emergency, he flew in among them, showering his kicks and cuffs right and left, and "creating a sensation" in every direction. And as hinted before, they bore this knock-down authority with great good-humor. A sober discreet, dignified officer could have done nothing with them; such a set would have thrown him and his dignity overboard. (Pp. 14-15)

Jermin's "knock-down" style versus the hypothetical "sober discreet, dignified officer" gives us extremes of style and indicates the

difficulties of combining in one man all of the traits that might be desirable in a good leader.[10] This passage also contains Omoo's very unflattering description of whaling crews, which contrasts significantly with Ishmael's opinions of his shipmates on the Pequod. It is important to remember that Melville, early in his career, and relatively soon after returning from the sea himself, was describing these tough crewmen. Undoubtedly, some of his awareness of the necessity of authority and the desirability of good leadership derived from his memories of the "villains" and "savages" he sailed with in the Pacific.

Jermin is important to the theme of leadership because he has some characteristics that attend all of Melville's good leaders and because he so obviously wants to take command of the Julia. Foremost, and in stark contrast to Captain Guy, Jermin is a competent sailor. He navigates the ship to Tahiti although his method provokes some amusement among the crew (p. 62). He also sails into the dangerous Papeetee Bay without the aid of a pilot (p. 98). But, as good a sailor as he is, he cannot always manage the rebellious elements of this particular crew. As Captain Guy's illness worsens, Jermin calls a council of the "best men" (including Omoo). After mentioning that the captain might die, Jermin asks them to be loyal to him and guarantees a successful whale-hunt. The men reject his proposal this

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[10]Melville's perception of these difficulties accords with some recent sociological studies of leadership styles. Fred E. Fiedler's important study concludes that leadership effectiveness is dependent upon contingencies--that the same type of leadership behavior will not be suitable for all occasions. (Again, sociology has "almost proven" common-sense.) See A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 261.

time, but he tries again on the second night after they reach Tahiti. Intent on going ashore, however, the men again reject him and his inebriated promises of promotions and other rewards. The crew's unresponsiveness must have been particularly galling to Jermin since, in his own words, Guy is "no sailor" (p. 87) and since he had already been a commander once before (p. 35). Through Jermin's failure to win over the crew, Melville implies that having abundant heart qualities will not necessarily inspire people to follow.

In the theme of leadership, Omoo is an improvement over Typee because Melville does not just tell the reader about bad leadership, he shows it. The absence of discipline is dramatically presented in Chapter 4. In this episode Jermin shows heart, but no head, by going into the forecastle to argue with one of the crew--something "no prudent officer" would ever dream of doing (p. 17). In the resulting struggle, the crewman bests Jermin and sits on him. Captain Guy makes an appearance:

> Just then a thin tremor of a voice was heard from above. It was the captain; who, happening to ascend to the quarterdeck at the commencement of the scuffle, would gladly have returned to the cabin, but was prevented by the fear of ridicule. As the din increased, and it became evident that his officer was in serious trouble, he thought it would never do to stand leaning over the bulwarks, so he made his appearance on the forecastle, resolved, as his best policy, to treat the matter lightly. (P. 17)

Again, the narrator reveals the captain's motives for his actions.

When Jermin finally gets free and storms to Guy's cabin, a scene ensues which is later described to Omoo by the steward:

> After many high words, the captain finally assured him, that the first fitting opportunity the carpenter should be cordially flogged; though, as matters stood, the experiment would be a hazardous one. Upon this Jermin reluctantly consented to drop the matter for the present; and he soon

> drowned all thoughts of it in a can of flip, which Guy had previously instructed the steward to prepare, as a sop to allay his wrath. (P. 18)

This episode shows that, even though Guy cannot impose a strict discipline, he knows how to handle his chief mate. The scene also reveals (1) that Guy is aware of the tenuousness of his position and (2) that his qualities for leadership are the opposites of Jermin's. Guy does not have any of the heart and only part of the head; he has intelligence and perception, but not the competency.

Guy is presented as a "loser" every time Omoo mentions him. He wantonly fires a pistol at some natives (pp. 24-25). He is reduced to "speechless fright" when the ship is becalmed near some rocks (p. 27). Guy's strongest decision is one that precipitates the mutiny. When the Julia arrives at Tahiti, he gives orders to keep the ship out of port. Omoo says:

> Invalid whaling captains often adopt a plan like this; but, in the present instance, it was wholly unwarranted; and, everything considered, at war with the commonest principles of prudence and humanity. And, although, on Guy's part, this resolution showed more hardihood than he had ever been given credit for; it, at the same time, argued an unaccountable simplicity, in supposing that such a crew would, in any way, submit to the outrage. (P. 69)

When the revolt starts, Omoo takes part and, along with others, is arrested and detained on the island. During this detention, Guy recuperates and takes the Julia out to sea again. He is a very weak leader, but his greatest sin seems to have been incompetency rather than a malicious or tyrannical attitude.

The third ship captain in Omoo is the nameless leader of the Leviathan, the ship which Omoo joins at the end of the story. This captain is described by one of his own men as "the finest man in the world" (pp. 312-13). Omoo says of him:

> I had seen the captain, and liked him. He was an uncommonly tall, robust, fine-looking man, in the prime of life. There was a deep crimson spot in the middle of each sun-burnt cheek, doubtless the effect of his sea-potations. He was a Vineyarder, or native of the island of Martha's Vineyard (adjoining Nantucket), and--I would have sworn it--a sailor, and no tyrant. (P. 312)

Melville's praise of this captain obviously distinguishes him from the captains of the Reine Blanche and the Julia. In juxtaposing "sailor" and "tyrant," Melville suggests that since tyranny is an abuse of authority, good "sailoring" is the proper use of authority. "Sailor" as a word of praise seems to connote a balance of head and heart. It seems to mean competency in the profession, whatever one's job happens to be and acceptance of the special brotherhood of those who live and work on the sea. In addition to having the special skills of navigation and organization required of his position, the praise-worthy captain would humanely administer the discipline necessary to get the work done and intelligently provide the means to make that life as pleasant as possible. Although we do not get to see him in action, the Leviathan's captain seems to have these things in balance.

In Omoo, Melville's first extended study of leaders in action, the focal point of the discussion is discipline. The Julia does not have enough; the Reine Blanche, too much. Melville never questions the necessity of authority, but he does look at the way authority is used to organize and run a ship. He presents two extremes which result in inefficient operations. Then he ends the book with the suggestion of a middle way. In his next book, he gives more detail of this middle ground.

Unlike the first two books, Mardi only has one designated

ship captain, and he seems to represent Melville's idea of a good leader. He is neither tyrannical nor incompetent, but he has not had much luck in fulfilling his mission. The lack of activity is so boring to Taji, the narrator, that he wishes to be "blessed with some despot of a captain against whom to stir up some spirited revolt" simply to enliven his shipmates.[11] Taji describes the captain this way:

> The skipper himself was a trump; stood upon no quarter-deck dignity; and had a tongue for a sailor. Let me do him justice, furthermore: he took a sort of fancy for me in particular; was sociable, nay, loquacious, when I happened to stand at the helm. But what of that: Could he talk sentiment or philosophy? Not a bit. (P. 5)

In addition to being kind to the young sailor, this captain possesses another quality usually found in Melville's good leader: a lack of "quarter-deck dignity." Melville does not like the pretentiousness of those nautical customs that put false barriers between the officers and the men. His dislike becomes more evident in the three books that follow Mardi.

The depiction of this unnamed captain is very short, but even so Melville shows him to be a humane leader. Having no luck finding whales near the equator, the captain decides to head north to Japan. Taji is stunned by this decision and explains why. First, hunting the Right Whale is degrading to a true whaler who prides himself on capturing the more elusive Sperm Whale. Secondly, Taji feels that the captain's decision was a "tacit contravention of the agreement between

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[11] Herman Melville, Mardi: and A Voyage Thither, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 5. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[them]" (p. 6). Soon he confronts the captain with the idea that he had only shipped for one voyage and that to be in warmer latitudes of the Pacific. This confrontation shows the captain to be a man of head and heart. He uses his intelligence to try to accomplish the mission, yet he understands and tolerates the consternation of the young sailor:

> "Sir," said I, "I did not ship for it; put me ashore somewhere, I beseech." He stared, but no answer vouchsafed; and for a moment I thought I had roused the domineering spirit of the sea-captain, to the prejudice of the more kindly nature of the man.
>
> But not so. Taking three turns of the deck, he placed his hand on the wheel, and said, "Right or wrong, my lad, go with us you must. Putting you ashore is now out of the question. I make no port till this ship is full to the combings of her hatchways. How ver, you may leave her if you can." (P. 6)

This captain's attitude seems to be a good example of the "firm and benignant spirit" which Melville used to characterize Lord George Paulet. In any case, Taji is aware of the possibility of raising the "domineering spirit of the [stereotyped] sea-captain"; instead, he gets a logical, but sympathetic, reply. The last sentence Taji takes as both a challenge and a permission to leave the ship. The captain probably meant it as a sad, ironic commentary on the way humans are trapped by fate.

The last scene which shows this captain in action occurs in Chapter 8. Taji and his companion, Jarl, desert by outfitting a boat with supplies and then, late one night, yelling, "Man overboard!" In the excitement they quickly lower their boat and row away from the ship as if they are going to the rescue. As other sailors begin to respond to the alarm, confusion reigns until the captain restores order. He tries to encourage the "rescuers" already launched to

save his "lost" crewman by shouting, "Pull! pull, men! and save him!" (p. 28). Taji and Jarl keep rowing until the last thing they can hear is the "hoarse" shout of the captain. Even in the excitement of the protagonist beginning his adventure, Melville clearly taints the episode by showing that Taji has taken advantage of a competent and concerned man, a good leader.

In summary, Melville presents a wide variety of ship captains in his first three books. He strongly suggests that a man can be a good leader if he combines the necessary qualities of head and heart, but he does not give an extended portrait of any ship captain who has these qualities. Melville shows some of the anti-authoritarianism that becomes so obvious in the next three books, but he never suggests that authority itself is inherently evil. The fault is in the men who hold the leadership positions. In these first books, however, Melville does create one lengthy portrait of a leader developing the balanced qualities of leadership. This character is Media, one of two political rulers who help us to a better understanding of Melville's concept of the good leader.

## II

The political leaders that Melville describes at length are Mehevi, king of the Typees, and Media, Taji's host in Mardi. Mehevi is a good example of the absolute ruler who does not stand on "quarter-deck dignity." When Tommo first meets Mehevi, he says, "I forthwith determined to secure, if possible, the good will of this individual, as I easily perceived he was a man of great authority in his tribe. . ." (p. 79). He secures the personal attention, if not

the good will, of Mehevi, but he is still surprised when much later he learns that Mehevi is the greatest of chiefs:

> The revels . . . brought together all the warriors whom I had seen individually and in groups at different times and places. Among them Mehevi moved with an easy air of superiority which was not to be mistaken; and he whom I had only looked at as the hospitable host of the Ti, and one of the military leaders of the tribe, now assumed in my eyes the dignity of royal station. (P. 186)

Mehevi is king without superfluous pomp and circumstance. The nature of his authority and of all authority in Typee Valley fascinates Tommo, and he speculates on how it is maintained without the usual trappings of power:

> All [of the people] appeared to mix together freely, and without any reserve; although I noticed that the wishes of a chief, even when delivered in the mildest tone, received the same immediate obedience which elsewhere would have been only accorded to a preemptory command. What may be the extent of the authority of the chiefs over the rest of the tribe, I will not venture to assert; but from all I saw during my stay in the valley, I was induced to believe that in matters concerning the general welfare it was very limited. The required degree of deference towards them, however, was willingly and cheerfully yielded; and as all authority is transmitted from father to son, I have no doubt that one of the effects here, as elsewhere, of high birth, is to induce respect and obedience. (Pp. 185-86)

Tommo concludes that the natives are governed by a "tacit common-sense law" which reflects a natural perception of what is "<u>just</u> and <u>noble</u>" (p. 201). He finally adds:

> I will frankly declare, that after passing a few weeks in this valley of the Marquesas, I formed a higher estimate of human nature than I had ever before entertained. But alas! since then I have been one of the crew of a man-of-war, and the pent up wickedness of five hundred men has nearly overturned all my previous theories. (P. 203)

Mehevi is a good leader in his almost utopian society. It is improbable that his style of leadership would be effective on that man-of-war Melville was soon to use as a metaphor for the "real" world.

Mehevi's example, though, of authority without pretentiousness is one sign of Melville's idea of the good leader.

The portrayal of the other political leader, King Media, emphasizes the need for the good leader to have heart. By the time Media becomes important in the story, Taji has rescued a white maiden named Yillah from some Polynesians who intended to sacrifice her, has lived with her in a brief idyllic interlude, and has suffered her mysterious disappearance. To help Taji find her, Media organizes a search party which includes Babbalanja, a philosopher; Mohi, a historian; and Yoomy, a poet. But while Media is a gallant and noble friend to Taji (because Media accepts Taji as an equal in their demi-god status), he reveals in the conduct of his political affairs an authoritarian attitude, badly in need of heart.

At this time in the story also, the point of view changes from one that is primarily first-person narration to one that is more or less omniscient. At times during the remainder of the book, Taji will reassert an "I" into the flow of events, but, generally he is silent while an omniscient narrator describes the physical settings and movements and records the conversation of the four Mardians. This shift in narrative style causes some problems in interpretation; but, because it coincides with Media's replacing Taji as the central authority figure in Mardi, it presents no obstacle to understanding Melville's emphasis on good leadership. Under both modes of narration, the plot centers on the education of a leader. The first part, which I will examine in detail shortly, recounts the trials and tribulations that Taji experiences as a fledgling ship commander. The second part (the tour of Mardi in search of Yillah which occupies

the last three-fourths of the book) focuses on the development of Media's sense of brotherhood with, and compassion for, the common man.

There are a variety of opinions on how Melville handled his characters in this second part of Mardi. Some critics imply there is very little characterization. F. O. Matthiessen, for example, talks of Babbalanja as "Melville's philosophical mouthpiece."[12] In Melville's "Mardi": A Chartless Voyage, Merrell R. Davis counters that idea: "These Mardians are in fact more than mere mouthpieces for Melville's ideas and opinions. His manipulation of their conversations indicates that he conceived opinions appropriate to them as humor characters and made opportunities in which their temperaments could be exposed."[13]

Of course there is also disagreement on which character is most important. Many commentators continue to focus on Taji as the character of primary importance during the tour of Mardi and, consequently, try to relate the events of that tour directly to him. In Melville and Authority, for example, Nicholas Canaday entitles his chapter on Mardi, "Taji's Quest for Authority." He says: "Taji's quest for Yillah throughout Mardi, a search for an authority to which he is intellectually willing to accord obedience, takes him to a variety of islands. The institutions he finds there, with one

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[12]Matthiessen, p. 379.

[13]Merrell R. Davis, Melville's "Mardi": A Chartless Voyage (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1952), p. 160.

exception, are primarily political in nature."[14] Without denying Taji's importance, H. Bruce Franklin makes this observation: "When the first four Mardian visits reveal four stages of kinghood, they indicate that one of the main objects of the search will be to discover what a king is. . . . The changing definition of King Media forms much of the structure of the voyage."[15] Both of these concepts are important, but it seems to me that Franklin's suggestion is the one that most clearly unites all the incidents of the voyage.

Taji's quest for Yillah, who represents perfection, and Media's education are related by the fact that the governments of each island they visit are imperfect. As Merrell R. Davis points out, the defects in various islands make it impossible for Yillah (as a symbol) to exist on them.[16] These defects are usually governmental, and since the governments are mostly monarchies, the flaws stem from the bad leadership of the kings. As Media and Babbalanja discuss these defects, Media gradually begins to show more compassion for the common man. While Taji's quest and Media's education proceed simultaneously, the specific incidents Melville chooses to illustrate are most closely related to Media's development as a good leader.

Since I am emphasizing Media's role more than most commentators, I offer the following suggestion for a possible source of Melville's interest in Media's education. Elizabeth S. Foster, in

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[14]Nicholas Canaday, Jr., Melville and Authority, Univ. of Florida Monographs, No. 28 (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1968), p. 14.

[15]H. Bruce Franklin, The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1963), p. 36.

[16]Davis, p. 197.

commenting on literary sources for this book says, "The Faerie Queen looms behind Mardi, most conspicuously in the symbolic contrast between Yillah and Hautia [a worldly, sensuous queen]."[17] The Faerie Queen may also have influenced Melville to develop the tour of Mardi as a democratic restatement of a major concern of Renaissance humanists: the rights and duties of an educated aristocracy. Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, which was first published with The Faerie Queen in 1590, shows that Spenser was working in this tradition:

> The generall end therefore of all the books is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline. . . . I chose the historye of king Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person. . . . In which I have followed all the antique Poets historicall, first Homere, who in the Persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Aeneas. . . .[18]

Except for Taji's dramatic renunciation of the world at the very end of the story, Media's education provides a framework for the actual events of the tour through Mardi. The narrator first reveals Media's lack of heart by describing the living conditions of the commoners on Odo, Media's island kingdom, and by showing him as a judge holding court. The poverty and oppression experienced by the lower classes is a blight on paradise and on Media's leadership:

> The common sort, including serfs, and Helots, war-captives held in bondage, lived in secret places, hard to find. . . . Deep among the ravines and the rocks, these beings lived

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[17] Elizabeth S. Foster, Historical Note, Mardi (see footnote #11), p. 681.

[18] Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queen in Edmund Spenser's Poetry, ed. Hugh Maclean (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 1.

> in noisome caves, lairs for beasts, not human homes; or built them coops of rotten boughs--living trees were banned them--whose mouldy hearts hatched vermin. (P. 191)

As judge, Media summarily orders the execution of a rebel once his guilt is established. He also angrily rejects a petition for establishing a trial by jury system. The arbitrary, authoritarian nature of his kingship is revealed in this rejection:

> "Subjects! so long as I live, I will rule you and judge you alone. And though you here kneeled before me till you grew into the ground, and there took root, no yea to your petition will you get from this throne. I am king: ye are slaves. Mine to command: yours to obey. (P. 185)

Media's retreat from this imperial stance begins as soon as the search party departs Odo in their large canoes. Most of the educational process is shown in Media's conversations with, and feelings toward, the philosopher, Babbalanja. These two do most of the talking during the tour, and they influence each other. Media becomes more of a philosopher-king, and Babbalanja, under the influence of the worldly Media, tempers the most esoteric of his speculations. Although this interaction is almost continuous, I will only highlight some major incidents showing Media's growth into a leader who has both heart and head.

The first conflict between Media and Babbalanja occurs when Media, the king and demi-god, tries to eliminate the royal equivalent of "quarter-deck dignity." When he announces that all "stiffness and stage etiquette should be suspended," Babbalanja, a mere mortal, tests the king's sincerity in the following scene:

> "Away they go," said Babbalanja; "and, my lord, now that you mind me of it, I have often thought, that it is all folly and vanity for any man to attempt a dignified carriage. Why my lord,"--frankly crossing his legs where he lay--"the king, who received his ambassadors with a majestic toss of the head, may have just recovered from the tooth-ache. That thought should cant over the spine he bears so bravely."

> "Have a care, sir! there is a king within hearing."
> "Pardon, my lord; I was merely availing myself of the immunity bestowed upon the company. Hereafter, permit a subject to rebel against your sociable decrees. I will not be so frank any more."
> "Well put, Babbalanja; come nearer; here, cross your legs by mine; you have risen a cubit in my regard." (Pp. 208-209)

This exchange establishes the constant tension between the apologist for royalist privilege and the one for democratic leveling. For the remainder of Volume One, most of Media's education comes from observing the failings of various island rulers.

There are few major conflicts between Babbalanja and Media until the very end of the volume. This important confrontation begins when Babbalanja proposes that each man carries a "devil" within him, even though most men do not know they are bedeviled. He adds that some of these devils are harmful and some harmless. Media decides that Babbalanja's devil is harmful because this theory "by implication . . . absolves [the common man] from moral accountability" (p. 318). Then, in what he calls a practical application of Babbalanja's theory, Media "humorously" commands his attendants to tie up the philosopher. When Babbalanja objects, Media points out that Babbalanja obviously does not know that he is bedeviled. Babbalanja unphilosophically struggles but finally submits to bondage. Soon Media, relishing the role of teacher, releases him and asks how he likes the practical results of his theory. Babbalanja regains the teaching role by replying, "The strong arm, my lord, is no argument, though it overcomes all logic" (p. 319). These words end Volume One; Melville emphasizes the importance of this confrontation by placing it at the mid-point of the book. The scene is important because it foreshadows the kind of interaction the king and the philosopher will have

throughout the second volume.

Media's education dominates the plot of Volume Two even though Taji's quest is the stated reason for the voyage. Although Taji gradually comes to realize that Yillah will not be found in "this world," only one major scene is given to that realization. That scene shows the sensual Hautia trying to convince Taji that the sanitized perfection of Yillah no longer exists. In the 331 pages of Volume Two, this confrontation only takes about ten pages and does not occur until after Media's education is completed.

Melville develops the educational process by showing Media and Babbalanja coming closer and closer together not only in philosophical attitudes but in loving friendship. When it comes time for the two to part, Media has acquired enough heart to be a good leader and Babbalanja has become realistic enough to accept what happiness is available in this world. Tracing Media's education is important because it is Melville's first attempt to portray fully the qualities necessary for good leadership. Melville builds the educational process around four major topics: organized religion, politics, friendships, and the religion of love.

Maramma is the island of organized religion. Near the end of their visit, the voyagers see the priests of the island seize a young pilgrim who seeks Alma (God/Christ) without going through formalities of the organized church. When the priests sentence the pilgrim to death, Yoomy, the poet, begs Media to save the boy. Media, knowing their small group could do nothing in this instance and knowing the ways of the world, replies, "His fate is fixed. Let Mardi stand" (p. 347).

Later Media's discourse reveals that his decision was not based solely on the practicalities of the moment but also on a philosophical distrust of any absolutes, including the young pilgrim's "pure" faith as well as the church's dogmas. When Babbalanja starts discussing the events of Maramma, Media stops him because those are topics "which all gay, sensible Mardians, who desired to live and be merry, invariably banished from social discourse" (p. 369). Media is being neither flippant nor anti-intellectual. Although he attributes his non-involvement to his demi-god status, Media's next speech shows that he has the head qualities of intelligence and perception. He is the rational, prudent man or, as John Seelye puts it, he is an eighteenth-century skeptic.[19] On the subject of religion, Media says:

> "Meditate as much as you will, Babbalanja, but say little aloud, unless in a merry and mythical way. Lay down the great maxims of things, but let inferences take care of themselves. . . . And if doubts distract you, in vain will you seek sympathy from your fellow men. For upon this one theme, not a few of you free-minded mortals, even the otherwise honest and intelligent, are the least frank and friendly. Discourse with them, and it is mostly formulas, or prevarications, or hollow assumption of philosophical indifference, or urbane hypocrisies, or a cool, civil deference to the dominant belief; or still worse, but less common, a brutality of indiscriminate skepticism. Furthermore, Babbalanja, on this head, final, last thoughts you mortals have none; nor can have; and, at bottom, your own fleeting fancies are too often secrets to yourselves; and sooner may you get another's fixed. . . . The free, airy robe of your philosophy is but a dream, which seems true while it lasts; but waking again into the orthodox world, straightway you resume the old habit. And though in your dreams you may hie to the uttermost Orient, yet all the while you abide where you are. Babbalanja, you mortals dwell in Mardi, and it is impossible to get elsewhere." (Pp. 369-70)

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[19] John Seelye, Melville: The Ironic Diagram (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), p. 40.

While it is tempting to speculate on the relationship between Media's words and Melville's own thoughts on this subject, this speech is most important because it shows some of Media's intellectual capabilities and his ability to influence Babbalanja. When Media finishes the above speech, Babbalanja says:

> "My lord, you school me. But though I dissent from some of your positions, I am willing to confess, that this is not the first time a philosopher has been instructed by a man." (P. 370)

This exchange shows that Media can be thoughtful; it also shows that he considers himself above common humanity. Most of Media's education consists of his coming to realize that he is "a man"--as Babbalanja slyly puts it.

The political area of the education process is vast because every island they visit has at least one governmental flaw that is exposed in some way. The general tenor of these episodes shows absolutist or authoritarian rule to be bad. It is usually Babbalanja who points out the flaws, and it is usually Media who disagrees.

The most interesting feature of the political education, however, is the conservative reaction of both the king and the philosopher to the experimental democracy found in Vivenza (America). When they first reach the shores of Vivenza, they see an inscription which reads, "In-this-re-publi-can-land-all-men-are-born-free-and-equal" (p. 513). Media proclaims the statement false, and Babbalanja asks how long it can remain so. Media is convinced of his opinion when they find a smaller clause which says, "Except-in-the-tribe-of-Hammo." Oviously Melville is commenting on slavery in America. The importance of this scene, though, is that the philosopher who unreservedly espouses leveling is skeptical of this democratic

experiment and the king who distrusts absolutes readily notes that the "constitution" of the democracy contains an exception to its own absolute assertion about equality.

Other unusual events occur in this land which seem to bring Media and Babbalanja closer together in their political opinions. When the visitors hear a statesman of Vivenza venomously attack Dominora (England), Babbalanja, somewhat surprisingly, tells his friends that the two countries should have more respect for each other (pp. 519-20). When the travelers visit the southern part of Vivenza, Media startles the group by showing compassion for the slaves or, as Babbalanja puts it, a "kingly sympathy for suffering" (pp. 532-34).

The focal point of the visit to Vivenza, however, is the discovery of an anonymous scroll which warns the "sovereign-kings" of the new land about some of the failings and potential hazards of democratic government. The scroll contains a mixture of conservative political thought (such as praise of monarchies) and philosophical thought stressing individual freedom as an end of government. The question, which Melville purposely raises, is whether Babbalanja or Media wrote the scroll. The narrator reports that both were frequently absent from the group just before the scroll appears. He brings up the question of authorship again after the scroll is read.

Some key passages will show the reason for the confusion, and they will also show Melville's conservative warning to the Jacksonian democrats of the America of his day. The scroll begins with a recital of the cycles of history and a reminder of the termination of past republics. The scroll then mentions that there is nothing

inherently good or bad about any particular form of government:

> Thus far, for you, sovereign-kings! your republic has been fruitful of blessings; yet, in themselves, monarchies are not utterly evil. For many nations, they are better than republics; for many, they will ever so remain. . . . Better be the subject of a king, upright and just; than a freeman in Franko [France], with the executioner's ax at every corner.
>
> It is not the prime end, and chief blessing, to be politically free. And freedom is only as a means; it is no end in itself. (Pp. 527-28)

On the problems of leadership in a democracy, the scroll says:

> "World-old the saying, that it is easier to govern others, than oneself. And that all men should govern themselves as nations, needs that all men be better, and wiser, than the wisest of one-man rulers. But in no stable democracy do all men govern themselves. Though an army be all volunteers, martial law must prevail. Delegate your power, you leagued mortals must. The hazard you must stand. (P. 528)

The difficulties of making freedom an end of government are also addressed:

> There is much bowing and cringing among you yourselves, sovereign-kings! Poverty is abased before riches, all Mardi over; any where, it is hard to be a debtor; any where, the wise will lord it over fools; every where, suffering is found.
>
> Thus, freedom is more social than political. And its real felicity is not to be shared. That is of a man's own individual getting and holding. It is not, who rules the state, but who rules me. Better be secure under one king, than exposed to violence from twenty millions of monarchs, though oneself be of the number. (Pp. 528-29)

One can almost see Melville smiling as he describes the reaction of the citizens of Vivenza to these thoughts. After tearing the scroll to shreds, they shout, "Old tory and monarchist! . . . Preaching over his benighted sermons in these enlightened times! Fool! does he not know that all the Past and its graves are being dug over?" (p. 530). Then they begin a witch-hunt for the author.

Melville creates a joke at the reader's expense by raising

the question of who really wrote the scroll. The joke is important, though, because it emphasizes the drawing together of the philosopher and the king. Babbalanja and Media immediately accuse each other of writing the scroll. Then the narrator makes an editorial insertion:

> Now, could it have been Babbalanja? Hardly. For, philosophic as the document was, it seemed too dogmatic and conservative for him. King Media? But though imperially absolute in his political sentiments, Media delivered not himself so boldly, when actually beholding the eruption in Franko [the 1848 French Revolution].
>
> Indeed, the settlement of this question must be left to the commentators on Mardi, some four or five hundred centuries hence. (P. 530)

Of course, raising the question of authorship was a smokescreen to hide the fact that it was Melville himself who was expressing those conservative and thoughtful criticisms of the democratic experiment. Even so, the question fits an important pattern in the story. At the beginning of the voyage through Mardi, neither Media nor Babbalanja could have written it. The scroll is a conservative and compassionate document which shows a complex awareness of the relationship between government and peoples' hopes and fears. The education is nearing its completion.

Throughout the voyage Media and Babbalanja show increasing respect and admiration for one another. This friendship is the main theme of the visit to King Abrazza, the last monarch the travelers meet. One afternoon on Abrazza's island, Media mentions an ancient writer, Lombardo, author of the Koztanza. After a lengthy discussion in which Babbalanja makes the well-known statement, "Genius is full of trash" (p. 595), Media asks what each member of the group thinks of the Koztanza. Abrazza, insensitive lout that he is, says he has never read it. Each member of the group gives his opinion, and each

opinion comes with stage directions, a technique Melville uses again in Moby-Dick to stress important scenes. The last two to speak are the two friends:

> MEDIA (rising).--And I have read it through nine times.
> BABBALANJA (starting up).--Ah, Lombardo! this must make thy heart glad! (P. 602)

This meeting of the minds between the king and the philosopher is indicative of their growing friendship, but the events of dinner that night are an even greater measure of Media's progress towards the gaining of heart. At dinner Babbalanja's contributions to the conversation infuriate Abrazza so much that he twice orders his guards to throw the philosopher out. Each time Media countermands the order of the host, and after the second incident, Abrazza abruptly terminates the banquet (p. 609). Media uses his authority to protect his friend, and, at the same time, puts friendship for a commoner before royal protocol.

Media's education is completed on the island of Serenia--a land where the teachings of Alma are followed without all the trappings of the organized religion of Maramma. As they approach this island, Babbalanja describes its inhabitants as a band of enthusiasts engaging in folly, and Media thinks their social fabric is based on the idlest of theories (pp. 622-23). They meet an old guide who tells them more of the island, and their harsh attitudes begin to mellow. Babbalanja is impressed when the guide says that they do not believe in man's perfection--only that man has some good that they seek to nurture. He also likes the fact that there are no priests, temples, or fasting. Media becomes more interested when the old guide discusses the social state:

> "It is imperfect; and long must so remain. But we make not the miserable many support the happy few. Nor by annulling reason's laws, seek to breed equality, by breeding anarchy." (P. 627)

All the travelers still have their doubts, but when the guide recounts incidents of Alma's life which affect each of them, all except Taji declare their allegiance to Alma (p. 630).

The final bond between Babbalanja and Media is based on their accepting the teachings of love; the education of the king-philosopher is complete. Nathalia Wright puts it this way:

> The conversion of Media, in fact, very nearly creates the well-developed, clear-headed and warm-hearted man whom Taji and his companions seek. In him Odo [reason] and Serenia [heart] meet, the best of two incomplete existences; the reach without ceasing, the grasp shared with humanity.[20]

Babbalanja decides to stay in Serenia, and, when Media prepares to leave, the philosopher says these friendly, impassioned words:

> "Media! thy station calls thee home. Yet from this isle, thou carriest that, wherewith to bless thy own. These flowers, that round us spring, may be transplanted: and Odo made to bloom with amaranths and myrtles, like this Serenia. Before thy people act the things, [sic] thou here hast heard. Let no man weep, that thou may'st laugh; no man toil too hard, that thou may'st idle be. Abdicate thy throne: but still retain the scepter. None need a king; but many need a ruler." (P. 637)

In this climactic speech, Melville makes a clear distinction between authority which is good because it is necessary and authoritarianism which is bad. With a philosophy incorporating love and compassion, Media should be a good leader.

At this point in the story, both Taji and Media must confront

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[20]Nathalia Wright, "The Head and Heart in Melville's Mardi," PMLA, 66 (1951), 360.

reality. Taji does on the next island, the home of Hautia. Media returns to Odo and finds a rebellion in progress. He fearlessly walks right into the "stormy mob" and then addresses these parting words to Mohi and Yoomy:

> "In Serenia only, will ye find the peace ye seek: and thither ye must carry Taji, who else must soon be slain, or lost. Go: release him from the thrall of Hautia. Outfly the avengers, and gain Serenia. Reck not of me. The state is tossed in storms; and where I stand, the combing billows must break over. But among all noble souls, in tempest-time, the headmost man last flies the wreck. So, here in Odo will I abide, though every plank breaks up beneath me. And then,--great Oro! let the king die clinging to the keel! Farewell!" (P. 654)

This last view of Media evokes pity for a noble, and now enlightened, leader who may not have a chance to act on his new precepts. Media now possesses the balance of heart and head necessary to be a good leader, but we do not get to see him in action.

## III

Another important aspect of Melville's early interest in leadership is his treatment of the protagonists-narrators. As mentioned, developing this subject will involve some repetition because the three characters should be studied in order and separate from Melville's other authority figures. Tommo, Omoo, and Taji each take on the responsibility of guiding others to accomplish a mission. This development is one of the clearest indications of Melville's early conservative tendencies. While each of these characters, as is well-known, rebels against authoritarianism, each also becomes an authority figure faced with the problems of leadership. Melville's treatment of captains and kings in these books has generally called for a relaxation of absolute control, but the problem he gives the

protagonists is just the reverse. Omoo and Taji have insufficient control over their followers and must establish it if they are to succeed. In other words, while most of the formal leaders lack heart, the protagonists lack those qualities of intellectual sternness and discipline which belong to the head.

There is both a progressive development and a pattern in Melville's use of his protagonists as leaders. The progression is in the degree of involvement: Tommo becomes a leader out of necessity and is not very reflective about it; Omoo chooses to establish some control over his shipmates and comments on the problems of being a leader; but Taji consciously desires to take command and constantly reveals the thinking behind his actions. The pattern always involves three main events, though they do not always occur in the following order: (1) the narrator establishes himself as an elitist by informing us of his social and intellectual superiority over the majority of his shipmates; (2) he rebels but is careful to apologize for breaking the law; (3) he becomes a leader until a more dominant authority figure appears. This pattern further attests to Melville's conservatism: while Melville may have been sympathetic to the ideals of democracy, he did not believe in the equalitarianism of Jacksonian democracy;[21] while Melville's protagonists

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[21]In a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne in June, 1851, Melville says, "When you see or hear of my ruthless democracy on all sides, you may possibly feel a touch of a shrink, or something of that sort. It is but nature to be shy of a mortal who boldly declares that a thief in jail is as honorable a personage as Gen George Washington. This is ludicrous. . . . It seems an inconsistency to assert unconditional democracy in all things, and yet confess a dislike to all mankind--in the mass. But not so.--But it's an endless sermon,--no more of it." In other words, while Melville appreciated democratic theory, he had an aversion to democratic politics--the glorifying of the lowest common denominator. This letter can be found in The Letters of Herman Melville, eds. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 126-31.

rebel, they do not glory in their rebelliousness; and while they protest being under authoritarian control, they quickly perceive the need for some control when they become leaders.

In Typee the pattern is very condensed because by the sixth chapter the narrator and his friend, Toby, have already deserted the Dolly. Tommo first mentions the nature of the crew when they arrive at Nukuheva and the Marquesan girls swarm over the ship:

> Our ship was now wholly given up to every species of riot and debauchery. Not the feeblest barrier was interposed between the unholy passions of the crew and their unlimited gratification. The grossest licentiousness and the most shameful inebriety prevailed, with occasional and but short-lived interruptions, through the whole period of her stay. (P. 15)

Interestingly, Tommo does not separate himself from the rest of the crew when discussing this debauchery, but he does it soon enough.

The elitism that all of Melville's early narrators express first appears in Tommo's description of Toby, his partner in the desertion:

> Toby, like myself, had evidently moved in a different sphere of life and his conversation at times betrayed this, although he was anxious to conceal it. . . . There was much even in the appearance of Toby calculated to draw me towards him, for while the greater part of the crew were as coarse in person as in mind, Toby was endowed with a remarkably prepossessing exterior. (P. 32)

Tommo betrays some of his own good breeding when he announces his intentions to desert and then feels compelled to defend his intentions:

> To use the concise, point-blank phrase of the sailors, I had made up my mind to "run away." Now as a meaning is generally attached to these two words no way flattering to the individual to whom they are applied, it behoves me, for the sake of my own character, to offer some explanation of my conduct. (P. 20)

His defense is basically that Captain Vangs has violated the terms of their contract; therefore, Tommo does not feel bound to uphold his part of the agreement.

When Tommo and Toby desert their ship, they do so as equals; consequently, they tend to share the duties of leadership. In this leadership situation the biggest problem is one of motivation rather than control. Soon after leaving their sleeping shipmates, Tommo says to Toby, "You are the lightest and the nimblest, so lead on, and I will follow" (p. 37). Although Tommo initially passes the lead to Toby, the common-sense he shows in making that offer indicates one aspect of his own leadership.

Generally, on matters requiring thoughtful solutions, Tommo provides the initiative, and on those requiring intrepidity, Toby takes the lead. To oversimplify, Tommo's best points are of the head; Toby's of the heart.

The thirty some pages that recount their survival trek through the jungle are mostly a narration of adventure. There is little time for reflection on what is happening to them. However, Tommo does say, "I could not avoid a thousand times congratulating myself upon having such a companion in an enterprise like the present" (p. 62). We seldom get any of Toby's thoughts on the situation, but he seems to know instinctively when to exhort Tommo to try harder. Especially after Tommo hurts his leg, Toby frequently urges him to keep moving (pp. 52, 56, and 62).

Tommo's portion of the leadership includes rationing their meager supplies (p. 43) and keeping Toby's spirits from sinking too low. Toby, like many people who get emotionally "high" for some

event, seems to suffer severe depression when there is no call for physical action. On both the first and last nights in the jungle, Tommo comments that Toby's spirit is almost broken and that he refuses to engage in conversation (pp. 46 and 65). This lack of communication is a problem that almost all of Melville's leaders will encounter. It happens again between Taji and his fellow deserter, Jarl, between the lawyer and Bartleby, between Captain Delano and Benito Cereno (and Babo and Cereno), and between Captain Vere and Billy Budd. Tommo's problem disappears each morning, though, because each day makes new demands for physical courage which Toby never hesitates to meet.

Once they leave the mountains and enter a valley, Toby surprises Tommo by becoming cautious and proposing to hide in the upper reaches of the valley until Tommo's leg is healed and then hike back to the bay. Again, Tommo uses reason to convince his partner of a better plan:

> I objected strongly to this proposition, . . . I said that since we had deemed it advisable to enter the valley, we ought manfully to face the consequences, whatever they might be; . . . and that as to myself, I felt the necessity of rest and shelter, and that until I had obtained them I should be wholly unable to encounter such suffering as we had lately passed through. To the justice of these observations Toby somewhat reluctantly assented. (P. 67)

Ironically, they have entered the valley they have been trying to avoid, the valley of the dreaded Typees. Soon they are the prisoners of a strong leader, Mehevi, and their own leadership responsibilities are abruptly ended. This protagonist's experience with leadership has been very brief and fairly free of any serious problems.[22]

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[22]One of the interesting things about this relationship is that it became identified, in the public mind, with the story of

Melville uses the same pattern to develop the action in Omoo that he used in Typee, but because Omoo, the narrator, is more reflective than Tommo, the pattern is more elaborately detailed. As in Typee, the narrator gives us an indication of his own special nature by aligning himself with a special member of the crew. The detachment that Omoo feels from the majority of the crew is important because it leads him into both rebellion and leadership.

The special friend by whom Omoo defines his own position on the Julia is Doctor Long Ghost, a former officer who has been banished from the quarter-deck by Captain Guy. Omoo first indicates his common bond with the Doctor by commenting, "Upon the whole, Long Ghost was as entertaining a companion as one could wish; and to me in the Julia, an absolute godsend" (p. 12). As their friendship increases, Omoo says:

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Robinson Crusoe and Friday. In July, 1857 Putnam's Monthly printed this letter from Richard Tobias Greene:

> To the Editor:
> In the April number of Putnam, I saw an article on our authors--among others Herman Melville is spoken of. As I am the veritable "Toby" of which he wrote in "Typee," I would like to correct an error which many have fallen into respecting myself. I am often spoken of as Melville's valet, his "man Friday," etc., and by some as a myth. Now that I exist is true, and the book "Typee" is true, but I was not Herman Melville's valet, man Friday, or anything of the sort. I stood on the same footing with Melville. We both shipped as foremast hands on board a whale ship, in one of the whaling ports in Massachusetts, and from there made the romantic trip from which he wrote his "Typee." I was his companion from the time of our entering on board the whaler, until our separation on the Marquise [sic] islands, as related by himself in "Typee." A friendly communication exists between us, and I presume it is amusing to him to see "Toby" spoken of as his valet.

This letter can be found in Jay Leyda's The Melville Log (1951; rpt. [with supplement] New York: Gordian Press, 1969), p. 581.

> Aside from the pleasure of his society, my intimacy with Long Ghost was of great service to me in other respects. His disgrace in the cabin only confirmed the good-will of the democracy in the forecastle; and they not only treated him in the most friendly manner, but looked up to him with the utmost deference, besides laughing heartily at all his jokes. As his chosen associate, this feeling for him extended to me; and gradually we came to be regarded in the light of distinguished guests. At meal-times we were always first served, and otherwise were treated with much respect. (P. 36)

The "democracy of the forecastle" is not equalitarian, as the treatment of the two friends shows, and Omoo seems to relish the special treatment.

Education is the basic reason for the deference the crew gives the two-man elite. Omoo makes this clear when he describes the chess games he has with Long Ghost:

> Of chess, the men never could make head nor tail; indeed, their wonder rose to such a pitch, that they at last regarded the mysterious movements of the game with something more than perplexity; and after puzzling over them through several long engagements, they came to the conclusion that we must be a couple of necromancers. (P. 37)

In Omoo the protagonist actually assumes leadership before he declares his own rebellion, although the two events occur almost simultaneously. When the crew discovers that Captain Guy is not going to let the Julia enter the harbor at Papeetee, they start to rebel:

> All this was done in an instant; and things [illegible] looking critical, when Doctor Long Ghost and myself prevailed upon them to wait a while, and do nothing hastily; there was plenty of time, and the ship was completely in our power.
>
> While the preparations were still going on in the cabin, we mustered the men together, and went into council upon the forecastle.
>
> It was with much difficulty that we could bring these rash spirits to a calm consideration of the case. But the doctor's influence at last began to tell; and, with a few exceptions, they agreed to be guided by him. . . . (Pp. 69-70)

While this pacification is represented as a shared effort, the last few lines indicate that Long Ghost might wield more influence than Omoo. But soon Omoo shows the initiative expected of a leader. When the crew flares up again, he proposes that they write out their grievances on a "Round Robin." As narrator, he adds that he makes this proposal "by way of diverting their thoughts" (p. 74).

Omoo reveals his cautious, conservative nature when the mutiny first begins:

> For my own part, I felt that I was under a foreign flag; that an English consul was close at hand, and that sailors seldom obtain justice. It was best to be prudent. Still, so much did I sympathize with the men, so far, at least, as their real grievances were concerned; and so convinced was I of the cruelty and injustice of what Captain Guy seemed bent upon, that if need were, I stood ready to raise a hand. (P. 73)

When Omoo finally commits himself to active participation in the mutiny, he offers this rationale:

> I must explain myself here. All we wanted was to have the ship snugly anchored in Papeetee Bay; entertaining no doubt, could this be done, it would in some way or other peaceably lead to our emancipation. Without a downright mutiny, there was but one way to accomplish this: to induce the men to refuse all further duty, unless it were to work the vessel in. The only difficulty lay in restraining them within proper bounds. Nor was it without certain misgivings, that I found myself so situated, that I must necessarily link myself, however guardedly, with such a desperate company; and in an enterprise too, of which it was hard to conjecture what might be the result. But any thing like neutrality was out of the question; and unconditional submission was equally so. (Pp. 83-84)

In this passage he carefully distinguishes himself from the "desperate company" and reveals his intentions to lead them in a passive resistance.

To relate Omoo's situation to the head-heart terminology, his heart is with "the men," but his head is occupied with the

problem of controlling them and limiting the possible consequences. Omoo is thinking like a leader, and his use of the phrase "the men" is especially revealing because, as Melville explains in White-Jacket, it is a phrase by which "the common seamen are specially designated in the nomenclature of the quarter-deck."[23]

Omoo is not comfortable in this position, however, and relinquishes it as soon as he can. When the chief mate, Jermin, decides to sail into the harbor, Omoo publicly disassociates himself from the crew's refusal to work:

> Well knowing that if anything untoward happened to the vessel before morning, it would be imputed to the conduct of the crew, and so lead to serious results, should they ever be brought to trial; I called together those on deck, to witness my declaration:--that now that the Julia was destined for the harbor (the only object for which I, at least, had been struggling), I was willing to do what I could, toward carrying her in safely. In this step I was followed by the doctor. (P. 98)

Omoo's nice distinctions and maneuverings do not impress the civil magistrates, however, and the two friends find themselves treated as mutineers. As Omoo says, "There was no hope for either of us--we were judged by the company we kept" (p. 103). Ironically, the very distinction that enabled the two to have influence over the rest of the crew seems to insure their guilt:

> A man of any education before the mast is always looked upon with dislike by his captain; and, never mind how peaceable he may be, should any disturbance arise, from his intellectual superiority, he is deemed to exert an underhand influence against the officers. (P. 113)

Whether or not the phrase, "before the mast," is an echo of Two Years Before the Mast, the problems of the educated sailor that Melville

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[23] White-Jacket, p. 28.

depicts in his first few novels were also recurring motifs in Dana's masterpiece.[24] Of course, the educated Omoo has not been entirely "peaceable" in the sequence of events that lead to his detention as a mutineer. Omoo's brief experience as a leader of a mutiny has not agreed with his basically conservative nature.

There is one last instance of leadership on the part of Omoo that, though it is humorously presented, is a forerunner of what happens in Mardi--the protagonist assumes command of a small boat:

> Assuming the command of the expedition, upon the strength of my being a sailor, I packed the Long Doctor with a paddle in the bow, and then shoving off, leaped into the stern; thus leaving him to do all the work, and reserving to myself the dignified sinecure of steering. All would have gone well, were it not that my paddler made such clumsy work, that the water spattered, and showered down upon us without ceasing. Continuing to ply his tool, however, quite energetically, I thought he would improve after a while, and so let him alone. (Pp. 160-61)

This miscalculation by the fledgling leader finally results in the boat capsizing. Once it is righted, Omoo drops his aspirations, picks up the paddle, and the mission is completed. This is the last incident which has any direct bearing on Omoo's development as a leader.

In Mardi Melville seems to have a surer grasp of his intentions to explore leadership. The first part of the story centers on the narrator, Taji, becoming a leader, and the second part, as already discussed, focuses on a political leader, King Media, developing compassion for his subjects. The first part shows Taji developing qualities of the head; the second part shows Media gaining heart.

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[24] Richard Henry Dana, Two Years Before the Mast: Twenty-four Years After, introd. Richard Armstrong (New York: Dutton, Everyman's Library, 1969). For the narrator's detachment from his shipmates, see pp. 76, 87, 90, 95, 226, and 228. For the captains' reaction to his special status, see Chapter XXIX.

The pattern of establishing the narrator's distinctiveness and presenting his apology for breaking the law also appears in Mardi. Melville does not spend much time with these two parts of the pattern before making Taji a leader, but they are there. Taji is much more gentle than Tommo or Omoo when he distinguishes himself from his crew:

> Not a word against that rare old ship, nor its crew. The sailors were good fellows all, the half-score of pagans we shipped at the islands included. Nevertheless, they were not precisely to my mind. There was no soul a magnet to mine; none with whom to mingle sympathies; save in deploring the calms with which we were now and then overtaken. . . . (Pp. 4-5)

In fact Taji displays some affection for the Arcturion's crew, including the captain who "was a trump" and who "stood upon no quarter-deck dignity" (p. 5). All of Chapter 7 is an editorial insertion which expresses this affection; it begins with this apostrophe: "GOOD OLD ARCTURION! Maternal craft, that rocked me so often in thy heart of oak, I grieve to tell how I deserted thee on the broad deep" (p. 24).

But Taji does desert and chooses an old "Viking" tar named Jarl to help him. Because he can find no "soul-magnet" and because the ship cannot locate any whales, Taji gets bored; he admits that he finds things "exceedingly dull" (p. 5). When the captain decides to leave the equator and sail to northern waters, Taji feels trapped and starts planning his desertion. His apology for this act is a muted one revealed in his initial reluctance to approach the upright Jarl with his plan: "I had many misgivings as to his readiness to unite in an undertaking which apparently savored of a moral dereliction. But all things considered, I deemed my own resolution quite venial . . ." (p. 16). Jarl agrees to go with him, not because the older sailor thinks the plan is any good, but because he loves Taji and

his loyalty to Taji is "extreme" (p. 14). As mentioned earlier, they execute their plan by stealing a small boat and simply rowing away from the ship.

Now there is a new situation in Melville's writings--his protagonist is the sole, unquestioned leader. Taji has one follower, and his mission is to survive the dangers of the open sea. He faces two major problems during the sixteen days they are in the open boat. First is the problem that most of Melville's leaders encounter: the incommunicativeness of their followers. Taji is very disturbed by Jarl's taciturnity and devotes a chapter to it (pp. 34-36). The other major problem Taji faces is a common one in survival: personality changes. On their eighth day, they enter a calm. Taji says:

> [A] change came over us. We relinquished bathing, the exertion taxing us too much. Sullenly we laid ourselves down; turned our backs to each other; and were impatient of the slightest casual touch of our persons. . . . I became more taciturn than he. I can not tell what it was that came over me, but I wished I was alone. I felt that so long as the calm lasted, we were without help that neither could assist the other; and above all, that for one, the water would hold out longer than for two. I felt no remorse, not the slightest, for these thoughts. It was instinct. (Pp. 49-50)

There is nothing Taji can do about the problem. The buoyant optimism and romantic longing that prompted him to initiate this daring scheme are stripped from him by an unmerciful Nature. On the fifth day of the calm they pick up a breeze, and soon their normal personalities return.

On the sixteenth day Taji and Jarl come upon a seemingly abandoned brigantine, the Parki. They cautiously board it that night but find nothing. At daybreak they discover two Polynesian

members of the former crew, Samoa and his wife, Annatoo. Samoa relates the unfortunate history of the Parki, and then he begins to question Taji. Taji consciously assumes the air of a master (p. 90), and his real leadership experience begins.

Melville deliberately shows how and why Taji establishes his command. The first instance of this process is a conflict with Annatoo. While exploring the ship, Taji and Jarl come across caches of miscellaneous goods which turn out to be results of Annatoo's kleptomania. When she discovers the caches have been disturbed, she verbally assaults both of them. Although Samoa had seemed impressed with Taji's masterful air, Annatoo is not, and Taji comments:

> This contempt of my presence surprised me at first; but perhaps women are less apt to be impressed by a pretentious demeanor, than men.
>
> Now, to use a fighting phrase, there is nothing like boarding an enemy in the smoke. And therefore, upon this first token of Annatoo's termagant qualities, I gave her to understand--craving her pardon--that neither the vessel nor aught therein was hers; but that every thing belonged to the owners in Lahina. (P. 92)

Taji's "pretentious demeanor" is part of a determined effort to establish himself as leader.

The next step he takes to become the leader is to establish some "quarter-deck dignity." Of course, this dignity is not the false kind of a Vangs, Riga, or Claret. It is the kind that conveys to all involved the solemn seriousness of certain decisions or acts made by the supreme authority of a ship's miniature society. After Annatoo's outburst, Taji assesses the situation and comments that he "repaired to the quarter-deck" (p. 96). Then he summons the other three people to come to him there and expresses his opinion that they should continue on their westward course. He tells the reader, "All

this I said in the mild firm tone of a superior; being anxious, at once, to assume the unquestioned supremacy" (p. 96). He also admits that part of his motivation to take command is to prevent the chaos that would result if there were no authority to control Annatoo (p. 96). All agree with his plan, and they get underway--with, as Taji says, "the command of the vessel tacitly yielded up to myself" (p. 97).

While Jarl takes the helm, Taji relates his own thoughts:

> As I stood by his side like a captain, or walked up and down on the quarter-deck, I felt no little importance upon thus assuming for the first time in my life, the command of a vessel at sea. The novel circumstances of the case only augmented this feeling; the wild and remote seas where we were; the character of my crew, and the consideration, that to all purposes, I was owner, as well as commander of the craft I sailed. (P. 97)

Taji's becoming leader of this small band is, for him, an important moment which Melville treats with respect. This passage provides further evidence that Melville's sympathies were not simply with those characters who were rebellious.

In addition to showing Melville's respect for authority, this moment contains two other significant ideas. First, for those inclined to symbolism, is the possibility that this scene is a metaphor for the author taking command of his artistic craft. This idea could be substantiated by the later developments of this book and by the well-recognized importance of Mardi to Melville's overall development. Another important idea is the correlation between freedom and command. All of Melville's early protagonists desire to be free, and Taji's desire to be "in charge" is entirely consistent with that desire, at least in one sense. When one has absolute control, one has the

freedom to act. In another sense, of course, command does have many restraints. For the good leader, the responsibility of getting the mission done puts a limit on many of his personal desires. It is only fair that Taji feels important at this moment; in his new role, Melville gives him one crisis after another.

The most important development during Taji's brief tenure as commander of the Parki is his acquisition of the qualities associated with the head: discipline, the need to punish infractions of discipline, and, above all, acting in the best interests of the mission even if the heart has to be suppressed.

Taji confronts two major disciplinary problems: his crewmen sleep on duty and his crew-woman steals everything she can. The following passage not only explains the sleeping problem, it also shows Taji's intense concern for his mission:

> Several times I was seized with a deadly panic, and earnestly scanned the murky horizon, when rising from slumber I found the steersman, in whose hands for the time being were life and death, sleeping upright against the tiller. . . .
>
> Were it not, that on board of other vessels, I myself had many a time dozed at the helm, spite of all struggles, I would have been almost at a loss to account for this heedlessness in my comrades. But it seemed as if the mere sense of our situation, should have been sufficient to prevent the like conduct in all on board our craft. (P. 109)

As a new commander, Taji thinks the mission should suffice to motivate the crew, although, by his own experience, he knows better. As a potentially good commander, he keenly feels the responsibility for the mission; as a new one, he mistakenly assumes that the crew equally shares his concern. He temporarily solves this problem by using Annatoo.

In her own way, however, Annatoo presents as dangerous a

problem to Taji as the sleeping of the men. Soon after Taji and Jarl boarded the Parki, Taji makes this observation: "It was indispensable that she should at once, be brought under prudent subjection; and made to know, once for all, that though conjugally a rebel, she must be nautically submissive" (p. 91). He never quite succeeds in controlling her rebelliousness, especially her thievery. After giving her the extra responsibility of two turns at the helm, Taji hopes she will improve. But her behaviour does not change, and the fledgling leader learns another lesson:

> In the simplicity of my soul, I fancied that the dame, so much flattered as she needs must have been, by the confidence I began to repose in her, would now mend her ways, and abstain from her larcenies. But not so. (P. 113)

What disturbs him most about this thievery is its violation of the common good: "Now, here were four human beings shut up in this little oaken craft, and, for the time being, their interests the same. What sane mortal, then, would forever be committing thefts, without rhyme or reason" (p. 114). The conduct necessary for safe accomplishment of their voyage is very clear to him as leader, but, again, a crewmember does not share his concern.

Finally, she goes too far, and Melville, through Taji, shows that he well understands the need to punish infractions of discipline. When Annatoo steals their compass, Taji takes disciplinary measures:

> Further lenity was madness. I summoned Samoa, told him what had happened, and affirmed that there was no safety for us except in the nightly incarceration of his spouse. To this he privily assented; and that very evening, when Annatoo descended into the forecastle, we barred over her the scuttle-slide. (P. 114)

The major lesson Taji learns on the way to developing the head qualities necessary to leadership is that one cannot always be

guided by emotional leanings, that is, by promptings of the heart. When Taji finds kegs of Otard in the hold of the ship, he first wants to share it with his crew: "I found the Otard, and drank thereof; finding it, moreover, most pleasant to the palate, and right cheering to the soul. My next impulse was to share my prize with my shipmates" (p. 106). But then he has a "judicious reflection" and begins to analyze the probable results of his inclination: Jarl was prone to "overmuch bibbing"; Samoa, "like all Polynesians, much loved getting high of head"; and Annatoo might be inflamed "into a Fury" (pp. 106-107). He decides to withhold it:

> In good time, then, bethinking me of the peril of publishing my discovery;--bethinking me of the quiet, lazy, everpresent perils of the voyage, of all circumstances, the very worst under which to introduce an intoxicating beverage to my companions, I resolved to withhold it from them altogether.
>
> So impressed was I with all this, that for a moment, I was almost tempted to roll over the cask on its bilge, remove the stopper, and suffer its contents to mix with the foul water at the bottom of the hold. (P. 107)

On second thought he keeps it, but his decision is realistic and "hard-headed." As one new to command, he is "impressed by all this." This probably means that, for the first time, he has suppressed the emotional urge towards good fellowship with his "shipmates" and followed the sterner course which his intellectual perception of the mission demands. Taji mutes the impact of this decision by humorously rationalizing his desire to keep the cognac; nevertheless, he has learned an important lesson about putting the mission first.

While Taji is in command of the Parki, Melville chooses to show him dealing with insubordination, dereliction of duty, dissention among his crew, theft, and a dangerous storm which kills Annatoo and

*destroys the brigantine.* Basically Taji's reaction to all of these problems are those of a good man trying to be a good leader. In this depiction of Taji, Melville clearly shows his awareness of the need for discipline and order--qualities of the head necessary to run a miniature society under trying conditions. After the Parki sinks, Taji's command is reduced. When he leads the rescue of Yillah, he seems to be following the dictates of his heart more than his head. He questions his own motives for this act, but refuses to analyze them (p. 135). Soon after the rescue they arrive in Mardi, and the focus shifts to the education of the new authority figure, Media.

Taji and Media are each representative of a potentially good leader in some stage of his development. Altogether the portraits of ship captains, political leaders, and protagonists who become leaders reveal Melville's extensive interest in leadership and some of his conservative attitudes. Taji's episode ends the young, first-person narrators' opportunities for leadership. In Melville's next three books, the narrators are far removed from leadership positions, and the abuses of command and authority are the primary concerns of these followers (and their creator). Of these three books, only White-Jacket directly suggests that there may be such a creation as a good leader, but all three of them give considerable attention to leaders who fall short of the ideal.

## CHAPTER TWO: LEADERS WITHOUT HEART

With Redburn and White-Jacket Melville entered a new phase of writing, one which he disparaged by calling these books "two jobs, which I have done for money--being forced to it, as other men are to sawing wood."[1] Compared to his first novels, these two works present a harsher, more realistic view of life at sea. Fortunately for Melville and us, with Moby-Dick he got to write the kind of book he wanted. In an unpublished dissertation, Christine Bird discusses the idea that the nautical literature of both Cooper and Melville moved from romance, to realism, to metaphysics.[2] Thus stated, the progression is misleading because the metaphysical stage is not exclusive of realism. The Pequod, like the Neversink and the Highlander, has a motley crew which has to battle both natural and man-made terrors. These three ships also have another thing in common--an authoritarian captain.

Unlike the first three books, in Redburn, White-Jacket, and Moby-Dick there is only one main leader. Also, there is no continuous search on Melville's part for the qualities that make a good leader; the ideal is still a balanced combination of the head and the heart.

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[1]Herman Melville to Lemuel Shaw, 6 October 1849, in The Letters of Herman Melville, ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), p. 91. Hereafter this book is cited as Letters.

[2]Christine M. Bird, "Melville's Debt to Cooper's Sea Novels," DAI, 33 (1972), 4332A (Tulane).

What is most clear in this second triad of books is that Melville considers all three of the ship captains short of the ideal. Captain Riga, in Redburn, is competent but seems heartless, especially to the young protagonist. In White-Jacket Melville questions both the head and heart of Captain Claret--at times he appears both incompetent and insensitive. Captain Ahab, of course, towers above all the other leaders in the first six books. He clearly possesses the head qualities of competence and intelligence; he also has the heart qualities (as shown in his protection of Pip and his love for his young family), but he deliberately subordinates them to his intellectual quest.

The three captains have in common a lack of heart, and they are clearly portrayed as authoritarian tyrants. Even so, Melville continues to distinguish between the evils of authoritarianism and the necessity of authority; the abuses of power and command draw Melville's wrath, but he never advocates physical rebellion. In the famous last chapter of White-Jacket, Melville lists many of the world's oppressions, but he concludes with the conservative plea, "Let us not mutiny."[3] Also, as romantically appealing as Ahab is in his magnificent rebellion against God, fate, and convention, Melville juxtaposes Ishmael as a less spectacular, but more realistic, alternative to Ahab's obsessive destructiveness. While Riga and Claret do not have the obsessions of Ahab, all three use authoritarian methods to complete their respective missions, and Melville condemns them for it.

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[3]Herman Melville, White-Jacket: or the World in a Man-of-War, ed. Harrison Hayford, et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 400. All further references to this work appear in the text.

While the protagonist-narrators do not become leaders in these three books, they are still crucial to the issue of leadership. They are directly affected by the actions of the captains they are observing, and their objectivity might be considered suspect. In Moby-Dick Melville achieves a sense of objectivity by not bringing Ahab and Ishmael into direct conflict and by the sophisticated technique of treating them both as protagonists. In White-Jacket Melville develops some objectivity on the subject of leadership by pairing men who represent extremes of style. In Redburn he achieves it by using humor to undercut the extreme reactions of the very young protagonist.

I

The issue of leadership in Redburn is usually subordinate to the main theme of the initiation of Wellington Redburn, the "Sailor-boy." Because he is the "Son-of-a-gentleman," all non-genteel aspects of his initiation to the ways of the merchant service seem tyrannical to him. However, even in the first third of the book where the initiation theme predominates and Riga seems at his worst, Melville shows that the captain is at least competent. In the last third of the book (the return voyage) the focal point of the story becomes Riga's handling of the emigrants. The theme of initiation becomes a subordinate one found mostly in the travails of Redburn's friend, Harry Bolton.

The story of Redburn's first voyage is told by Redburn himself long after the events take place. The narrator establishes the distance between himself as storyteller and as a novice seaman in the

fourth paragraph: "I was then but a boy."[4] This distancing allows the narrator to relay both the pain of his initiation and the comical aspects of it.

The painful part is very evident because the ship has a structured hierarchy and Redburn is at the bottom of it. The pain is symbolized by sea-sickness (p. 40) and is very pronounced in the scene where neither mate wants the "greenhorn" in his watch:

> While this scene was going on, I felt shabby enough; there I stood, just like a silly sheep, over whom two butchers are bargaining. Nothing that had yet happened so forcibly reminded me of where I was, and what I had come to. (P. 39)

The initiation has the usual situations that any novice finds himself in: difficulties with jargon (p. 65) and unquestioning obedience (p. 29). Redburn also gets hurt by judging solely on appearances. In Chapter 3 he says, "As soon as I clapped my eye on the captain, I thought to myself he was just the captain to suit me. He was a fine looking man . . . I liked him amazingly" (p. 15). As soon as they get to sea, however, Redburn realizes that the captain's attitude has changed: "What reminded me most forcibly of my ignominious condition, was the widely altered manner of the captain toward me" (p. 67).

The initiate is also pained by the character of the crew. Like all of Melville's early protagonists, Redburn is appalled by their general coarseness and feels superior to most of them: "[A]t the outset I had deemed them such a parcel of wicked hard-hearted rascals

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[4]Herman Melville, Redburn: His First Voyage, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1969), p. 3. This same point is emphasized again on p. 200. All further references to this work appear in the text.

that it would be a severe affliction to associate with them" (p. 47). At one point he softens towards the crew and engages a crewman in a religious conversation. Redburn's reasoning reveals much of his naivete:

> Thinking that my superiority to him in a moral way might sit uneasily upon this sailor, I thought it would soften the matter down by giving him a chance to show his own superiority to me, in a minor thing; for I was far from being vain and conceited. . . . I was particular to address him in a civil and condescending way. . . . (P. 49)

Of course, the rebuff this pretentious kindness begets is another humiliating lesson for Redburn.

Redburn's initiation is nearly over by the middle of the book, which allows the theme of Riga's leadership to become more important. Near the end of the voyage to Liverpool, Redburn mentions:

> As I began to learn my sailor duties, and show activity in running aloft, the men, I observed, treated me with a little more consideration, though not at all relaxing in a certain air of professional superiority. (P. 120)

As he gains competency, he gains some respect, and at least one part of the initiation is nearly over. The middle portion of the book describes Redburn's stay in Liverpool, and it contains another major lesson in his initiation: "[T]he thing [the guidebook] that had guided the father, could not guide the son" (p. 157). William H. Gilman called this scene "the climactic event in Redburn."[5]

The last third of the book concerns the return voyage, and although Redburn has one more lesson to learn, the primary initiate now is Harry Bolton. In the structure of the story, Bolton is a "twin" for Redburn except that he does not succeed. He is a

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[5]William H. Gilman, Melville's Early Life and Redburn (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1951), p. 188.

gentleman's son who is also charmed by Riga (p. 219), who holds himself aloof from the crew (pp. 253-54), and who never succeeds in gaining the crew's respect (pp. 253-57). Redburn's last lesson comes when he tries to collect his pay only to learn that his unauthorized foray into London from Liverpool forfeited his wages (p. 307). But, overall, Redburn's initiation is a very minor part of the last third of the book.

Much of the initiation's comedy develops from the older narrator's realistic view of some of the then painful things that happened to him. Many of these incidents involve the captain and the hierarchy. For example, the boy has trouble adjusting to his lower station in life, and after a few days at sea, he decides to pay a social call on the captain. The sailors tease him for these plans, but he ignores their taunts because of his social superiority to them. He is on his way when the chief mate grabs him, "chews him out," and shoves him back to the forecastle. The narrator then says:

> The upshot of this business was, that before I went to sleep that night, I felt well satisfied that it was not customary for sailors to call on the captain in the cabin; and I began to have an inkling of the fact, that I had acted like a fool; but it all arose from my ignorance of sea usages. (P. 69)

Redburn learns more about sea usages when he is working on the quarter-deck and greets the captain:

> I never saw a man fly into such a rage; I thought he was going to knock me down . . . the mate came running up, and thrust me forward again. . . . Indeed this chief mate seemed to have the keeping of the dignity of the captain; who, in some sort, seemed too dignified personally to protect his own dignity. (P. 70)

Soon Redburn concludes that Riga is a "shabby fellow" and his youthful indignation takes this form: "Yes, Captain Riga, thought I, you are

no gentleman, and you know it!" (p. 71).

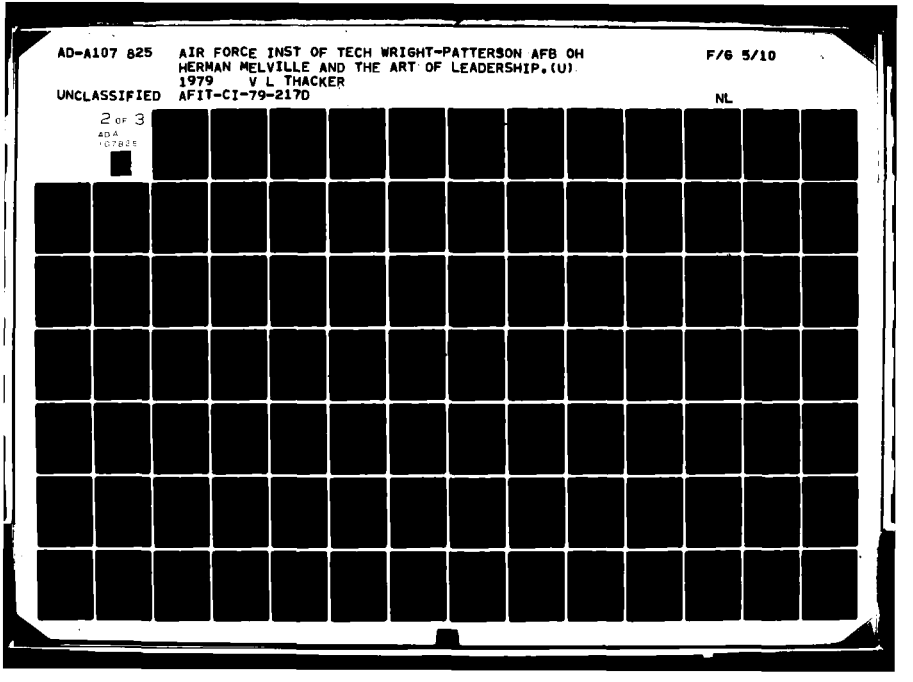
But even while Redburn is adjusting to ungentlemanly (heartless?) sea usages, the narrator foreshadows the last part of the story by showing an interest in the captain's decisions. When the Highlander passes a wrecked ship with some long-dead sailors lashed to the railing, Redburn expects the captain to stop and bury them:

> On the part of the sailors, no surprise was shown that our captain did not send off a boat to the wreck; but the steerage passengers were indignant at what they called his barbarity. For me, I could not but feel amazed and shocked at his indifference; but my subsequent sea experiences have shown me, that such conduct as this is very common, though not, of course, when human life can be saved. (P. 103)

The most pervasive element of the return voyage is Riga's handling of the emigrants. Although the narrator relates other anecdotes, such as a death by spontaneous combustion and Bolton's initiation, he always returns to the emigrants' plight. At one point Redburn comments on the regulations the emigrants live under. As usual in Melville's works, the narrator notes with disfavor the authoritarian nature of rules at sea, but then he qualifies his dislike by admitting that unusually strict laws are necessary:

> The emigrants in these ships are under a sort of martial-law; and in all their affairs are regulated by the despotic ordinances of the captain. And though it is evident, that to a certain extent this is necessary, and even indispensable; yet, as at sea no appeal lies beyond the captain, he too often makes unscrupulous use of his power. (P. 263)

The following incident shows, at least, that Riga is a competent commander who knows how to avoid trouble; it may even show that he has some compassion for the emigrants. As the voyage drags on, the emigrants run out of food and start stealing anything on board. Captain Riga announces that any emigrant caught stealing will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be tied in the rigging and flogged. The narrator comments on the reaction to this order:

> Upon this, there were secret movements in the steerage, which almost alarmed me for the safety of the ship; but nothing serious took place, after all; and they even acquiesced in, or did not resent, a singular punishment which the captain caused to be inflicted upon a culprit of their clan, as a substitute for a flogging. For no doubt he thought that such rigorous discipline as that might exasperate five hundred emigrants into an insurrection. (P. 284)

The actual punishment was to put the offender in a barrel with only his head and legs protruding. While the culprit walked around, he provoked so much laughter that even he himself was amused. The narrator suggests that Riga's motivation for substituting this punishment was a fear of insurrection. A more complimentary view might see it as compassion, or a mixture of fear and compassion called prudence.

The major crisis of the last third of the story also shows Riga to be a competent, if not heroic, captain. The crisis is a malignant fever. At the outset, the captain's actions seem to be those of a responsible, concerned leader:

> The captain himself went to see them [the infected emigrants]; and returning, sought out a certain alleged physician among the cabin-passengers; begging him to wait upon the sufferers; hinting that, thereby, he might prevent the disease from extending into the cabin itself. (P. 286)

As the fever spreads, the healthy emigrants panic and build a barricade in the steerage between themselves and the infected ones. The narrator says: "But this was no sooner reported to the captain, than he ordered it to be thrown down, since it could be of no possible benefit; but would only make still worse, what was already dire enough" (p. 287). Here, although the captain is trying to do what is

best, the sailors cannot accomplish the task because of threats from the emigrants.

To this point the captain's actions seem to meet with the narrator's approval, but now the tone changes:

> At this time, ten more men had caught the disease; and with a degree of devotion worthy all praise, the mate attended them with his medicines; but the captain did not again go down to them. . . .
>
> The panic in the cabin was now very great; and for fear of contagion to themselves, the cabin passengers would fain have made a prisoner of the captain, to prevent him from going forward beyond the mainmast. Their clamors at last induced him to tell the two mates, that for the present they must sleep and take their meals elsewhere than in their old quarters, which communicated with the cabin. (P. 288)

These observations do not condemn Riga, but they do indicate his dilemma, and, more importantly, the narrator's interest in that dilemma. With some fair weather and an increased food allowance from Riga, the emigrants finally shake the fever, and Melville concludes the episode with a homily on the proper treatment of emigrants.

Redburn's last initiation is another direct conflict between himself and the captain. The youngster goes for his pay only to find that some of his past misdeeds cause him to owe the ship money. His unauthorized jaunt into London with Harry is penalized by forfeiture of his wages. Also, once during the voyage he was ordered to knock the rust off the anchor, a duty which he tried to avoid by dropping a couple of hammers into the sea (p. 122). He now finds that he has been charged for the lost tools, and without wages, he is indebted to the ship. Realizing his position, Redburn tells Riga that he cannot pay, but the captain can sue him if he wants.

As a preface to the final contact between the crew and their leader, Redburn gives this summary of the captain:

> Now, though Captain Riga had not been guilty of any particular outrage against the sailors; by a thousand small meannesses--such as indirectly causing their allowance of bread and beef to be diminished, without betraying any appearance to having any inclination that way, and without speaking to the sailors on the subject--by this, and kindred actions, I say, he had contracted the cordial dislike of the whole ship's company; and long since they had bestowed upon him a name unmentionably expressive of their contempt. (P. 308)

The "thousand small meannesses" denote a lack of heart which the sailors acknowledge by asking Riga (after they have been paid) to come on deck. When he does, they all face away from him and bow, "an abominable insult to all who happened to be in their rear . . ." (p. 308).

Thus, the major sign of the crew's dissatisfaction with Riga's leadership is this expression of coarse humor. This fact indicates that Melville was not seriously analyzing leadership--even though it became a significant part of the story. It may also indicate the narrator's realization that, during his own initiation, he could not objectively judge the man who epitomized the world into which he was being initiated. At any rate, Melville does not have the narrator discuss the problems of leadership in great detail. The final impression we have of Riga is his petty authoritarianism.[6] In the next work, both the problems and the analysis are more serious.

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[6]There is a good chance that this corresponds to Melville's impression of his first voyage. In Melville's Early Life Gilman points out that conditions on the St. Lawrence could not have been too bad:

> Nor was their condition under Captain Brown particularly grievous, if the contemporary rate of desertion is a reliable yardstick. Only three of them, less than 20 percent, left the ship at Liverpool whereas of four ships that sailed from New York within two weeks of the "St. Lawrence" the percentages of desertion were 45, 48, 62, and 70. (P. 131)

## II

White-Jacket, like Redburn, is an initiation story, but the theme of leadership is much more significant and pervasive in the military novel. While the title identifies the symbol of the initiation theme, Melville carefully indicates his other main theme in a prefatory remark. To signify the importance of leadership in this novel, he quotes from Thomas Fuller's "Good Sea-Captain": "Conceive him now in a man-of-war; with his letters of mart, well armed, victualed, and appointed, and see how he acquits himself." As usual with Melville, the presence of irony appears likely because in showing how Captain Claret "acquits himself," the idea of a good sea-captain is undercut. Nevertheless, the subject of leadership is quickly introduced to the reader. The third chapter of the novel opens with a statement on "the necessity of precision and discipline" (p. 8) and continues: "Were it not for these regulations a man-of-war's crew would be nothing but a mob . . ." (p. 9). Melville also clearly indicates the importance of this theme by asking two key questions at crucial points in the story. The first one is "Are there incompetent officers in the American Navy?" (p. 112), and the second is "Who put this great gulf between the American Captain and the American sailor?" (p. 301).

Of course the narrator who asks these questions is also the initiate, and a cursory review of his initiation will show his basically conservative approach to these social questions. This protagonist is not as "green" as Redburn was. White-Jacket has previously been on whaling ships, but his youth, inexperience, and attitude toward the average crewmember set him apart. The symbol of his

distinctiveness is the white jacket. Howard P. Vincent discusses its importance:

> Encased in this crudely contrived garment patched up from wishful thinking, childhood dreams, escapist hopes, and aristocratic pretensions, White-Jacket in his isolated retreat high in the main-top hopes that he will be protected from the storms which rage around Cape Horn (evil, the heedless, destroying world). . . . White-Jacket's isolation, however, results not from any deep desire to know himself through contemplation but rather from his refusal to participate in the ordinary life of humanity. Though he achieves a delusory protection from the cold and the storm, he finds his jacket inadequate and must, in time, abandon it or be destroyed by it.[7]

Like Melville's other young protagonist-narrators, White-Jacket thinks of the majority of the crewmen as "perverse" (p. 74), depraved (p. 142), corrupt (p. 182), and as "skulkers and scoundrels of all sorts" (p. 382). Like the others, White-Jacket is an elitist and relishes any special privileges that he and his select friends may have.[8] Of his top-mates in the quarter-watch he says: "Whatever the other seamen might have been, these were a noble set of tars. . . . We accounted ourselves the best seamen in the ship . . ." (pp. 13-15). Later he calls himself a hermit and says, "[M]y comrades of the

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[7]Howard P. Vincent, The Tailoring of Melville's "White-Jacket" (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), p. 23.

[8]Larry J. Reynolds makes this same point in "Anti-Democratic Emphasis in White-Jacket," American Literature, 48 (1976) 15. He also says that since Matthiessen's American Renaissance,

> a dominant trend in Melville scholarship has been to emphasize the democratic, Democratic, humanistic, and humanitarian aspects of Melville's works, particularly the early works, Typee through Moby-Dick, and the last, Billy Budd. The question of whether this emphasis has obscured important antithetical aspects of Melville's can be answered only in a study much broader in scope than the present one. . . . (Pp. 27-28)

This study, focusing on leaders and leadership, will attempt to provide some of those answers.

maintop comprised almost the only persons with whom I unreservedly consorted while on board the frigate. . . . I was not at all singular in having but comparatively few acquaintances on board, though certainly carrying my fastidiousness to an unusual extent" (p. 50). And, as a final example of his un-Jacksonian elitism, White-Jacket says, "Our mess . . . was composed of so fine a set of fellows; so many captains of tops, and quarter-masters--men of undeniable mark on board ship . . . that, with impunity, we could do so many equivocal things, utterly inadmissible for messes of inferior pretension" (pp. 185-86).

For all his satisfaction with his friends, White-Jacket is still an initiate who is known among the crew at large because he wears the distinctive garment and because he is "Jack Chase's pet" (p. 202). A specific example of the initiation is *White-Jacket's* turn as cook for the first mess to which he is assigned. The pudding, or "duff," he makes turns out hard as a rock, and the mess unmercifully hazes him (pp. 60-61). An example of White-Jacket's youthfulness is his complaining about general quarters, the exercise which calls for each man to practice his combat duties. White-Jacket hates the hard work and offers a multitude of reasons to do away with the practice drills. But, in his youthful thoughts of a real battle he is certain that, even without practice, he would perform gloriously:

> I have no doubt that, had I and my gun been at the battle of the Nile, we would mutually have immortalized ourselves; the ramming-pole would have been hung up in Westminster Abbey; and I, ennobled by the king. . . . (Pp. 66-67)

The core of White-Jacket's initiation seems to be an acceptance of the world even with its imperfections. He has to learn that he

cannot be so separated from society, so "fastidious," and still survive. To the extent the jacket represents his separateness, it almost causes his death twice. Once some crewmen think he is a ghost in the rigging and try to shake him loose (pp. 77-78). After no one bids on his jacket at an auction, he things of throwing it overboard but refrains because of superstition: "If I sink my jacket, . . . it will be sure to spread itself into a bed at the bottom of the sea, upon which I shall sooner or later recline, a dead man" (p. 203). These frequent links between White-Jacket's life and the jacket culminate in the fall at the end of the story. After he falls into the sea, he tries to swim toward the ship, but the jacket prevents him. He finally takes his knife and rips the jacket "straight up and down, as if I were ripping open myself" (p. 394).

He literally has to do this to survive. The figurative meaning of this act, however, is controversial. In Melville's Drive to Humanism, Ray Browne says, "After the jacket disappears, he becomes one of the anonymous mass, as he wanted to."[9] Conversely, Larry Reynolds argues that this scene does not mean an acceptance of "the people."[10] John Seelye adds another factor to consider when he says, "White-Jacket is initiated not into the man-of-war society but out of it. . . ."[11] Alan Lebowitz attempts to synthesize the opposing views:

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[9]Ray B. Browne, Melville's Drive to Humanism (Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue Univ. Studies, 1971), p. 37.

[10]Reynolds, p. 25.

[11]John Seelye, Melville: The Ironic Diagram (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), p. 46.

> Freedom from the jacket is for White-Jacket freedom to be indistinguishable from his comrades and, ultimately, to land at home and take his place in society. Membership in civilized society, however, according to the insistent analogy between the Neversink and the world, is at best a doubtful honor, as Melville himself, exhausted and despairing at this point, well knew.[12]

There is nothing in the full scene which suggests that White-Jacket would not relish the exclusive company of his special friends once he was safe on board. Furthermore, he does not pause to consider social conditions on board or the "doubtful honor" of being in civilized society. He wants to get on that ship. Literally and figuratively, it represents life; any hesitation in trying to rejoin it means death. White-Jacket, literally and figuratively, chooses to be alive in an imperfect world. This is a basically conservative choice; he could rebel against the world of the Neversink by choosing to drown, but he instinctively struggles to rejoin it.[13] In the last chapter he repeats the lesson of this critical moment when he admonishes us to "not mutiny" against our man-of-war world.

In White-Jacket, more than in any other work, Melville gives specific attention to good leadership qualities and the necessity of authority in that world. In Mardi we can infer from the incidents

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[12]Alan Lebowitz, Progress Into Silence: A Study of Melville's Heroes (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1970), p. 129.

[13]One could argue that White-Jacket is not intellectually choosing to survive; he is simply acting on instinct. While the symbolism of an instinctive act should not be over-interpreted, it obviously means something. Basically, there is nothing on the Neversink bad enough to keep White-Jacket from wanting to rejoin it. In other words, fear of death is greater than a fear of the known evils of the man-of-war world. This instinct is not true for Bartleby and Benito Cereno, but White-Jacket, like Ishmael, and after all, like Melville, wants to live even though life is unfair and the world is far from perfect.

that Taji is developing qualities of the head and Media, of the heart. In White-Jacket inference is not necessary--which is probably one reason Vincent called the book a "documentary."[14] Melville presents his specific thoughts on leadership in three main ways: direct comments on leaders and their traits, observations on the training of leaders, and presentations of contrasting styles of leadership.

The first comment on these traits comes when White-Jacket describes the leader of the main-top men:

> I had not long been a member of this fraternity of fine fellows, ere I discovered that Jack Chase, our captain, was--like all prime favorites and oracles among men--a little bit of a dictator; not preemptorily, or annoyingly so, but amusingly intent on egotistically mending our manners and improving our taste, so that we might reflect credit upon our tutor. (P. 15)

The idea that a leader must be demanding also appears in a description of the crew's favorite officer: "Mad Jack was a bit of a tyrant--they say all good officers are--but the sailors loved him all round; and would much rather stand fifty watches with him, than one with a rose-water sailor" (p. 34). The italicized word is probably Melville's way of objecting to the literal meaning of "tyrant"; in any case there are frequent instances in the story to show that being demanding but fair is praiseworthy.

A long discussion of a good leader's qualities is triggered by one of the novel's most dramatic moments. In a gale off Cape Horn, Captain Claret rushes from his cabin and gives an order to run before the wind. Mad Jack, the officer of the deck, countermands that order

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[14] Vincent, pp. 105-06.

because following it would probably capsize the ship. The sailors obey the lieutenant. White-Jacket's first thought about the conflict is, "In time of peril . . . obedience, irrespective of rank, generally flies to him who is best fitted to command" (p. 110). He blames Claret's poor decision on too much brandy, and the problem of being in a position which usually demands "a cool head and steady nerves" but does not do so all the time. The lulls between demands on Claret's leadership, White-Jacket believes, give Claret a false sense of security and lead him to drink. By way of contrast, the narrator mentions that Mad Jack also has a drinking problem, but at sea he pulls demanding duties regularly and so "makes a point of keeping sober" (p. 111).

It is this incident which leads to the question of incompetent officers. In the ensuing discussion the example of Nelson and Wellington prompts the following remarks: "One large brain and one large heart have virtue sufficient to magnetize a whole fleet or an army," and "True heroism is not in the hand, but in the heart and the head" (p. 112). Of course these things are easier to state than to depict, and Melville never even tries to portray the fully balanced man in action until Billy Budd. Melville's most complete list of qualities needed to be a leader also grows out of this discussion:

> For the truth is, that to be an accomplished and skillful naval generalissimo needs natural capabilities of an uncommon order. Still more, it may safely be asserted, that, worthily to command even a frigate, requires a degree of natural heroism, talent, judgment, and integrity, that is denied to mediocrity. Yet these qualifications are not only required, but demanded; and no one has a right to be a naval captain unless he possess them. (P. 113)

White-Jacket makes other detailed comments on the role of the ideal captain. When discussing the role of the chaplain on a man-of-war, he says: "Where the captain himself is a moral man, he makes a far better chaplain for his crew than any clergyman can be" (p. 158). Another interesting observation concerns the ease with which some men wear command:

> Certain it is, from what I have personally seen, that the English officers, as a general thing, seem to be less disliked by their crews than the American officers by theirs. The reason probably is, that many of them, from their station in life, have been more accustomed to social command; hence, quarter-deck authority sits more naturally on them. A coarse, vulgar man, who happens to rise to high naval rank by the exhibition of talents not incompatible with vulgarity, invariably proves a tyrant to his crew. . . . [T]he Lieutenants from the Southern States, the descendants of the old Virginians, are much less severe, and much more gentle and gentlemanly in command, than the Northern officers, as a class. (P. 141)

This passage points out a problem. How, in a democracy, does one get a station in life that accustoms one to social command? This may be another example of the narrator's conservative viewpoint coloring his commentary; he does not pursue the thought. He does, however, show that simply being gentlemanly will not make one a good leader. He mentions that one of the third Lieutenants, a "good-natured" Virginian, is ineffective in getting the men to work (p. 119).

White-Jacket also gives other examples of bad leadership. There is no need to detail his lengthy, emotional attack on flogging, but it is important to relate it to his view of leaders.[15] The good

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[15]It might also be useful to point out that his attitude toward flogging is significantly different in Omoo. In that work the narrator says, "I do not wish to be understood as applauding the flogging system practiced in men-of-war. As long, however, as navies are needed, there is no substitute for it. War being the greatest of

leaders, Nelson, Collingwood, and Robert Blake, did not use it. White-Jacket flatly asserts, "The amount of flogging on board an American man-of-war is, in many cases, in exact proportion to the professional and intellectual incapacity of her officers to command" (p. 149).

Another way in which Melville expresses his interest in leadership concerns officer training. White-Jacket has considerable fun describing the "middies," the young midshipmen who are on board to learn the duties of a lieutenant. With tongue only partly in cheek, the narrator says, "the middies are constantly ordered about because the only way to learn to command, is to obey" (p. 25). One thing White-Jacket is serious about, though, is that "the man who is not in a good degree, fitted to become a common sailor will never make an officer" (p. 32). This theoretical idea is also behind a specific protest against the "tyranny" of "over-neat vessels":

> Let those neat and tidy officers who so love to see a ship kept spick and span clean; who institute vigorous search after the man who chances to drop the crumb of a biscuit on deck, when the ship is rolling in a sea-way; let all such swing their hammocks with the sailors, and they would soon get sick of this daily damping of the decks. (P. 86)

Melville's main method of discussing leadership is to present contrasting styles. He does this with midshipmen, lieutenants, and captains. The problem with the middies is that they have the same power as officers over the enlisted men. White-Jacket says, "[I]t needs no special example to prove that, where the merest boys, indiscriminately snatched from the human family are given such authority over mature men, the results must be proportionable in

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evils, all its accessories necessarily partake of the same character; and this is about all that can be said in defense of flogging." (CEAA edition, p. 108)

monstrousness to the custom that authorizes this worse than cruel absurdity" (p. 218). Some of the youngsters would indulge in "undignified familiarities" with the men, but if they themselves were slighted they could order any enlisted man flogged. After citing some examples of this problem, White-Jacket, by way of contrast, mentions "Boat Plug," one of the middies on the Neversink:

> Without being exactly familiar with them, he had yet become a general favorite, by reason of his kindness of manner, and never cursing them. It was amusing to hear some of the older Tritons invoke blessings upon the youngster, when his kind tones fell on their weather-beaten ears. "Ah, good luck to you, sir!" touching their hats to the little man; "you have a soul to be saved, sir!" (P. 219)

The comparison between lieutenants is the subject of all of Chapter 8: "There were several young lieutenants on board; but from . . . two--representing the extremes of character to be found in their department--the nature of the other officers of their grade in the Neversink must be derived" (p. 31). One type is represented by Mad Jack; the other, by a man known as Selvagee. The latter is tall and elegant but has little substance:

> [H]e still continued his Cologne-water baths, and sported his lace-bordered handkerchiefs in the very teeth of a tempest. Alas, Selvagee! there was no getting the lavender out of you.
>
> But Selvagee was no fool. Theoretically he understood his profession; but the mere theory of seamanship forms but the thousandth part of what makes a seaman. You can not save a ship by working out a problem in the cabin; the deck is the field of action. (P. 32)

In other words, Selvagee had the intellect, or part of the head qualities needed, but he still was not competent, and he surely lacked heart.

In comparison, Mad Jack is "in his saddle on the sea" (p. 53). He not only knows instinctively what to do, he is confident enough in

his abilities to challenge the captain or the sailors. In countermanding the captain's order during the gale, Mad Jack showed competency in knowing what to do and courage in taking definite action in very adverse conditions. His balance of head and heart is seen again when the sailors start to mutiny over Claret's order to trim their beards to regulation length. Mad Jack is officer of the deck when the fracas starts:

> [H]e jumped right down among the mob, and fearlessly mingling with them, exclaimed, "What do you mean, men? don't be fools! This is no way to get what you want. Turn to, my lads, turn to! Boatswain's mate, ship that ladder! So! up you tumble, now, my hearties! away you go!
>
> His gallant off-handed, confident manner, recognizing no attempt at mutiny, operated upon the sailors like magic. They tumbled up, as commanded; and for the rest of the night contented themselves with privately fulminating their displeasure against the Captain, and publicly emblazoning every anchor-button on the coat of admired Mad Jack. (P. 358)

White-Jacket reports rumors that Claret reprimands Mad Jack for acting as he did. The captain would have called the marines to charge the mutineers. But the narrator praises Mad Jack's leadership: "[Y]ou did right, and no one else could have acquitted himself better. By your crafty simplicity, good-natured daring, and off-handed air (as if nothing was happening) you perhaps quelled a very serious affair in the bud . . ." (p. 359). Melville is obviously attracted to a style of leader who can mix with the men and still motivate them. As one commentator said, Mad Jack is Melville's "beau ideal of a sea officer."[16] Howard P. Vincent also makes an interesting observation on Melville's problem with this hero:

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[16]Charles R. Anderson, Melville and the South Seas (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959), p. 365.

> In a documentary such as White-Jacket . . . Melville could scarcely embody [the] heroic concept in an actual captain. To have done so would have been to write a different book. Even the bare mention of the idea in relation to Mad Jack, whose intrepid heart and brain had saved the ship, had introduced a dramatic element which had to be dropped since it threatened to turn a documentary into a novel.[17]

White-Jacket makes one other comparison between lieutenants which involves the leader's need to enforce discipline in spite of the crew's laziness. During the most severe weather encountered rounding Cape Horn, the crew would lie down on the deck, huddle in their jackets, and go to sleep. The good-natured lieutenant from Virginia would try to keep the men moving, but as soon as he was out of sight, they would lie down again. In describing this problem, the narrator admits that sometimes it is good that the officers force the men to do something they do not want to do:

> We had six lieutenants, all of whom, with the exception of the First Lieutenant, by turns headed the watches. Three of these officers, including Mad Jack, were strict disciplinarians, and never permitted us to lay down on deck during the night. And, to tell the truth, though it caused much growling, it was far better for our health to be thus kept on our feet. (P. 121)

Here, of course, the disciplinarians make their demands for the good of both the men and the mission. It is the kind of fusion of head and heart that Melville would like to see in every leadership situation.

The final category of comparisons involves captains. Since there is usually just one captain per ship, White-Jacket can only compare Claret to another captain who is not present. The advantage of this method is that the absent officer can be idealized; the

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[17]Vincent, pp. 105-06.

narrator only has to show us what he wants us to see. In White-Jacket flogging is used as a major basis of comparison between Claret and the ideal officer. The first instance of this disciplinary action is a dramatic scene where Captain Claret, when appealed to for mercy, shouts, "I would not forgive God Almighty!" (p. 138). As mentioned earlier, the good officers White-Jacket cites did not resort to flogging. The primary comparison is between Claret and Lord Collingwood, a British admiral contemporary with Lord Nelson (see pp. 112, 148, and 217).

In the chapter entitled "Flogging not Necessary," White-Jacket begins with the anecdote that Nelson sent his ungovernable sailors to Collingwood. In explaining why Collingwood had the reputation of handling recalcitrant seamen so well, White-Jacket first stresses that, "He was an officer . . . who held in abhorrence all corporal punishment; who, though seeing more active service than any sea-officer of his time, yet, for years together, governed his men without inflicting the lash" (p. 148). The narrator also points out that the crewmen were not superior sailors; many were impressed or recruited from the jails to fight in the Napoleonic wars.

White-Jacket acknowledges the rumor that Collingwood began "by inflicting severe punishments" and then let that memory help control the men. But then he says:

> But, granting the quoted assertion to be true, how comes it that many American Captains, who, after inflicting as severe punishment as ever Collingwood could have authorized--how comes it that they, also, have not been able to maintain good order without subsequent floggings, after once showing to the crew with what terrible attributes they were invested? (P. 148)

White-Jacket's own answer to the question stresses Collingwood's balance of head and heart: it was "the influence wrought by a powerful brain, and a determined, intrepid spirit over a miscellaneous rabble" (p. 148).

We can wonder if White-Jacket would portray Collingwood as an ideal if he were serving on the admiral's ship, but that would be pure speculation. In this novel the narrator clearly intends to compare good and bad styles of leadership, and he does it by juxtaposing Collingwood, a type of the good leader, with Claret, a type of the bad one. This method of comparison is important because Melville resorts to it in his other military novel, Billy Budd. There the narrator again draws his ideal from the same period of British naval history, only this time it is Lord Nelson. The comparison is much more complex in the latter work because both leaders are presented as individuals rather than types. Whether or not Melville intended the portrait of Nelson to denigrate Vere will be discussed in the last chapter.

White-Jacket is not only Melville's most detailed analysis of leadership, it is also his most explicit statement on the necessity of authority. In The Tailoring of Melville's "White-Jacket", Vincent speaks of Melville's "full-throated assault on autocratic tyranny."[18] Since this assault has been analyzed and applauded by many commentators, there is no need to detail it here. But what frequently happens in these analyses is that Melville's insistence on the necessity of stringent discipline is overlooked. Even when it is mentioned,

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[18]Vincent, p. 55.

it is often misinterpreted. For example, in Melville and Authority, even Canaday, who takes careful note of Melville's recognition of the need for authority and discipline, says that White-Jacket perceives discipline as a "necessary evil."[19] "Evil" is a "loaded" word which probably does not reflect either White-Jacket's or Melville's intentions. There is abundant evidence that the author and his narrator consider discipline a necessary good. So, although Melville mounts his most severe attacks on authoritarianism and its abuses in this novel, he also records his strongest support for the necessity of an especially demanding authority at sea. Again, my point in this study is not to deny the intensity of Melville's attack on the abuses but to show that his concern for good leadership and the need for authority is also of great importance to him.

One minor, but significant, point in this issue is that the narrator seems to like some of the Neversink's leaders even though they are disciplinarians. The passages which convey this idea about Jack Chase and Mad Jack have already been mentioned. White-Jacket even speaks of the commodore as a "gallant old man" and a "venerable old warrior" before beginning his discussion of the old man "in his general character," in other words, as a "type" of remote authority (p. 21).

White-Jacket frequently pauses in his attacks on specific abuses to make exceptions for some good commanders. After explaining the tyranny of an over-neat ship, he says:

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[19]Nicholas Canaday, Jr., Melville and Authority, Univ. of Florida Monographs, HUMANITIES, No. 28 (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1968), p. 33.

> To the credit of the humane and sensible portion of the roll of American navy-captains, be it added, that they are not so particular in keeping the decks spotless at all times, . . . nor do they torment the men with scraping bright-wood and polishing ring-bolts. . . . (P. 88)

Similarly, after the first flogging, White-Jacket says: "Let us have the charity to believe them--as we do--when some Captains in the Navy say, that the thing of all others most repulsive to them, in the routine of what they consider their duty, is the administration of corporal punishment upon the crew . . ." (p. 138). And after discussing men-of-war and their officers in general, he observes that some vessels are "blessed with patriarchial, intellectual Captains . . ." (p. 385). Of course, this is a type of good leader Melville does not try to show in action until Billy Budd.

Another example of the narrator qualifying his attacks is his finding something good to say about Captain Claret. He mentions the Captain's "humane proceedings" in allowing the men to skylark (run about freely) to ward off the cold of the Cape (pp. 101-02). He also shows Claret making a correct decision to store the casks of port which the ship finds floating in the sea. Since there has been no grog on board for some time, the crew wants to drink their find immediately. They are outraged when the Captain orders the casks into the hold. While the narrator uses this episode to satirize the privileges of the captain (his supply of wine never ran out), he concludes the incident by showing that Claret had acted for the good of the crew. Although they did not get to gratify their immediate desires, they do get a rationed portion each day until the new-found supply runs out (pp. 153-54). .

Near the end of the story, White-Jacket summarizes his attitude

toward Captain Claret. After the flogging of old Ushant, who publicly defied the captain's legal order to trim his beard, the narrator shows the crew's rage at Claret but immediately makes this observation:

> As for Captain Claret, let it not be supposed that it is here sought to impale him before the world as a cruel, black-hearted man. Such he was not. Nor was he, upon the whole, regarded by his crew with any thing like the feelings which man-of-war's-men sometimes cherish toward signally tyrannical commanders. In truth, the majority of the Neversink's crew--in previous cruises habituated to flagrant misusage--deemed Captain Claret a lenient officer. . . What he was, the usages of the Navy had made him. Had he been a mere landsman--a merchant, say--he would no doubt have been considered a kind-hearted man. (P. 367)

Claret has some of the heart and the head, but not enough of either to be a good leader.

The most important distinctions, however, between Melville's attacks on authoritarianism and his support for authority are his direct comments. He frequently notes that the powers granted to leaders at sea must be greater than any permitted on land and that the discipline must be more rigid. That strict regulations prevent the crew from becoming a mob is stressed at the beginning of the story (p. 9). The narrator also mentions Jack Chase's willingness to bow to naval discipline while at sea (p. 17). And in one discussion of flogging White-Jacket states flatly that "the necessities of navies warrant a code for its government more stringent than the law that governs the land" (p. 144).

While discussing the officers' status and the issue of leveling, the narrator says, "[H]ardly any one will question that a naval officer should be surrounded by circumstances calculated to impart a requisite dignity to his position" (p. 166). With this preface, he then argues for abolishing the "excessive pomp" which only ministers

"to the arrogance of the officers, without at all benefiting the state" (p. 166). White-Jacket wants to reduce the extreme distinctions between officers and enlisted men, but to retain the necessary separation: "[B]y bringing down naval officers, in these things . . . without affecting their legitimate dignity and authority, we shall correspondingly elevate the common sailor, without relaxing the subordination, in which he should by all means be retained" (p. 166).

Finally, in concluding his argument on the unfairness of the Articles of War, White-Jacket again states clearly and unequivocally the case for authority:

> In final reference to all that has been said in previous chapters touching the severity and unusualness of the laws of the American Navy, and the large authority vested in its commanding officer, be it here observed, that White-Jacket is not unaware of the fact, that the responsibility of an officer commanding at sea--whether in the merchant service or the national marine--is unparalleled by that of any other relation in which man may stand to man. Nor is he unmindful that both wisdom and humanity dictate that, from the peculiarity of his position, a sea-officer in command should be clothed with a degree of authority and discretion inadmissible in any master ashore. (P. 304)

To summarize, in White-Jacket Melville makes his most explicit statements about being a good leader and about the necessity of authority. Almost every direct comment and every scene involving leadership stresses the desirability of a balance of heart and head. Almost every dramatization of the abuse of authority contains a cautionary note which stresses the necessity of a special authority at sea. Like the lesson of the initiation theme, the conservative thrust of this social theme is echoed in the final chapter where White-Jacket draws some grimly explicit parallels between a man-of-war and the world. In the conclusion of this homily, he says:

> Yet the worst of our evils we blindly inflict upon ourselves; our officers can not remove them, even if they would. From the last ills no being can save another; therein each man must be his own saviour. For the rest, whatever befall us, let us never train our murderous guns inboard; let us not mutiny with bloody pikes in our hands. (Pp. 399-400)

## III

If there is any consistency between White-Jacket and the novel which follows, it is this very kind of mutiny against the world of which Ahab is guilty. The third book of the triad in which Melville condemns authoritarian command is Moby-Dick. Unlike the two initiation stories, the condemnation is neither strident nor explicitly stated. In Moby-Dick it is subtly presented in dramatic form--represented by the survival of Ishmael, the only member of the Pequod's crew who disassociates himself from Ahab's vain quest. Of course Ishmael's survival is a comment not just on Ahab's leadership but also on the metaphysical nature of Ahab's quest to destroy evil. In fact, the narrator continually shows that Ahab has the capacity to be a great leader; the core of the tragedy lies in his deliberate suppression of the demands of the heart. The condemnation here is less one of anger and more of sadness that a great man, in his hard-heartedness, leads his crew on such a futile mission.

Again, the most practical way to study Melville's attitude toward leaders and leadership seems to be with separate looks at the younger follower who tells the story and at the particular leader of the ship he sails on. This emphasis on the reality of the setting is particularly important in Moby-Dick which, in its comprehensiveness, invites all kinds of metaphysical speculation. But as Daniel Hoffman says, Melville himself emphasized the realities of this voyage:

> The work is . . . almost everywhere saved from becoming what Melville shunned as 'a hideous and intolerable allegory' by his insistence upon tangible fact: the reality of an actual ship and live whales, of a particular captain and his crew, and the documentation which makes Moby-Dick a guide to all of the operations of the whaling industry.[20]

Ishmael, the sailor, has been at sea before, but he is a "green hand at whaling."[21] Ishmael, the narrator, is telling the story about ten years after the voyage; so, as in Redburn, there is a distinct distancing which allows the narrator the hindsight to assess events. It is this older Ishmael who presents himself as a mild mannered protagonist who is telling the story not only of his survival, but of his salvation, i.e. of why he thinks he was saved. As C. Hugh Holman says, "Ishmael's inquiring and reflective mind controls and informs the book, becomes both its center and its hero."[22] Of course, he is also telling the story of a very dynamic and obsessed ship captain, and that part of the story will be discussed shortly.

Ishmael, like Melville's preceding narrators, is initially disturbed by the motley composition of his crew. But unlike his predecessors, he adjusts to them without trying to hide in the protection of an elitist clique. This mature acceptance of his fellow man is the main theme of the first part of the novel, and, in some ways, is the resolution of the priggish non-acceptance by the five previous protagonists. Ishmael first considers Queequeg a savage, heathen

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[20]Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1961), p. 236.

[21]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1967), p. 73. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[22]C. Hugh Holman, "The Reconciliation of Ishmael, Moby-Dick and the Book of Job," SAQ LVII (Autumn, 1958) 488-89.

cannibal but, relatively soon, a good friend. His acceptance of Queequeg seems to make it easier for Ishmael to tolerate the rest of the crew:

> [T]he harpooners, with the great body of the crew, were a far more barbaric, heathenish, and motley set than any of the tame merchant-ship companies which my previous experiences had acquainted me with, still I ascribed this--and rightly ascribed it--to the fierce uniqueness of the very nature of that wild Scandinavian vocation in which I had so abandonedly embarked. (P. 109)

Ishmael accepts the crewmembers for what they are; however, he eventually separates himself from them and their allegiance to Ahab's quest.

A subordinate theme which runs through the first part of the story is the narrator's interest in leadership and authority. Obviously, Melville uses this to foreshadow the dramatic delayed appearance of Ahab, but it also reveals things about Ishmael.

In the first chapter the narrator informs us that he never goes to sea as a Commodore or a Captain; he abandons "the glory and distinction of such offices to those who like them" (p. 14). There is a somewhat jocular attitude in this and the following remarks which indicate to me Ishmael's acceptance of a hierarchial nature of things and his role in it. In this paragraph there seems to be a tone of good-natured common sense:

> What of it, if some old hunks of a sea-captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weighed, I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? Do you think the archangel Gabriel thinks anything less of me, because I promptly and respectfully obey that old hunks in that particular instance? Who aint a slave? . . . I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way--either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal

> thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each other's shoulderblades, and be content. (P. 15)[23]

Ishmael makes passing references to ship captains, such as a simile involving Nelson's death (p. 43), a discussion of the unscrupulous captain who shipped Jonah (pp. 46-47), and an altercation between Queequeg and the captain of the schooner which takes them to Nantucket (pp. 60-61). These instances reveal the narrator's propensity to note episodes involving leadership and responsibility. The remarks become more serious when he nears a decision on choosing his own captain.

Ishmael's meeting with the Quaker captains, Peleg and Bildad, prompts a reflection on the type of great leaders that the area, the religion, and the livelihood combine to produce. Following the pattern set in the earlier books, this greatness stems from a balance of head and heart:

> [W]hen these things unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain and a ponderous heart; who has also by the stillness and seclusion of many long night-watches in the remotest waters, and beneath constellations never seen here at the north, been led to think untraditionally and independently . . . that man makes one in a whole nation's census--a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies. (P. 71)

This anticipatory reference to Ahab is quickly passed over for the problems of the moment, but the remark is important because it is from this ideal that Ahab diverges when he subordinates the heart.

Ishmael almost changes his mind about sailing in "a vessel so questionably owned and temporarily commanded" when Peleg and Bildad

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[23]I am aware that Lawrance Thompson uses this same paragraph to begin his study of demonic intentions in Melville's Quarrel with God (see p. 8). Needless to say, I disagree with his basic contention that Melville and Ishmael approve of Ahab's rebellion.

almost come to blows (p. 75). The narrator also has second thoughts about not seeing Ahab "before irrevocably committing [himself] into his hands" (p. 76). Peleg's answers to some of Ishmael's questions stress that "it's better to sail with a moody good captain than a laughing bad one" (p. 77). The story line returns to the growing friendship between Ishmael and Queequeg but suddenly comes back to leadership when Elijah confronts the two friends. Elijah confirms that Ahab is a "good whale-hunter, and a good captain to his crew," but warns them that he is a strict disciplinarian (p. 87). As the days go by, Ishmael reflects:

> If I had been downright honest with myself, I would have seen very plainly in my heart that I did but half fancy being committed this way to so long a voyage, without once laying my eyes on the man who was to be the absolute dictator of it, so soon as the ship sailed out upon the open sea. (P. 90)

Throughout the first section, Ishmael's concern with leaders, especially the one he is soon to sail with, prepares the reader for Ahab's first appearance. As soon as the captain does appear, Ishmael, clearly the protagonist of the story until then, begins to fade as an active character. He remains to give us cetology and a few incidents involving himself, but he lets Ahab assume center stage. In Melville's overall scheme, however, these few incidents progressively show Ishmael's changing attitude which ends diametrically opposed to Ahab's. Ultimately, he accepts the things of the heart, but Ahab will not.

The key points in Ishmael's conversion start with the chapter entitled "Moby-Dick." The narrator begins it by admitting that he "was one of that crew" which swore "violence and revenge" (p. 155). But he ends the chapter by questioning the source of "evil magic"

that Ahab used to incite his followers. Ishmael's attitude is modified again when he is dunked during the first lowering. He reflects:

> There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. . . . He bolts down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions. . . . There is nothing like the perils of whaling to breed this free and easy sort of genial, desperado philosophy; and with it I now regarded this whole voyage of the Pequod, and the great White Whale its object. (Pp. 195-96)

His turn at the "monkey-rope" brings another revelation which separates him from Ahab's mission. Ishmael and Queequeg are tied together with Ishmael on deck acting as a guardian for the harpooner, who dangles between the ship and the dead whale. Since "usage and honor" demanded that the guardian go with the harpooner if he should "sink to rise no more," Ishmael reflects that his precarious position is emblematic:

> I saw that this situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes; only, in most cases, he, one way or other, has this Siamese connexion [sic] with a plurality of other mortals. If your banker breaks, you snap; if your apothecary by mistake sends you poison in your pills, you die. . . . But handle Queequeg's monkey-rope heedfully as I would, sometimes he jerked it so, that I came very near sliding overboard. Nor could I possibly forget that, do what I would, I only had the management of one end of it. (P. 271)

Ishmael is not particularly happy about these inter-relationships, but he accepts the reality of them. This attitude stands in contrast to Ahab's. When the captain realizes his dependence on the carpenter for another leg, he says: "Oh, Life! Here I am, proud as a Greek god, and yet standing debtor to this blockhead for a bone to stand on! Cursed by that mortal inter-indebtedness which will not do away with ledgers. I would be free as air . . ." (pp. 391-92).

Finally, Ishmael rejects his oath to Ahab. He stands in complete opposition to the captain because he accepts the promptings of his heart and the common ties he has to humanity. This acceptance is revealed while Ishmael is engaged in squeezing lumps out of the spermacetti. In responding to this sensual, serene experience, Ishmael says, "I forgot all about our horrible oath: in that inexpressible sperm, I washed my hands and heart of it" (p. 348). Ishmael makes a separate peace; he is still a member of the crew, but he no longer feels in bondage to the illegal mission the captain is leading. Of this stand, William H. Gilman says:

> Ishmael . . . abandons in horror the quest for self-annihilation. . . . he has perceived the truth, and it is a greater truth than what Ahab sees. It profoundly alters him and improves him. And though he lacks Ahab's eminence, and Ahab's passion or purpose, and Ahab's god-like quality, he would seem to be much more a human hero. He may be objected to as unheroic because he prefers life to death . . he prefers duration to intensity. . . . But even such a man can become heroic if only once in his life he takes a heroic stand.[24]

This renunciation of the "horrible oath" is the emotional climax of the voyage for Ishmael.[25] At this moment his thoughts are so fine that a "strange sort of insanity" comes over him:

> I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands in it [the spermacetti], mistaking their hands for the gentle

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[24]William H. Gilman, "The Hero and the Heroic in American Literature: An Essay in Definition," in Patterns of Commitment in American Literature, ed. Marston La France (Toronto: Carleton and the Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 13.

[25]C. Hugh Holman, in the article cited above, says, "The climax of the voyage for Ishmael, and the intellectual climax of the novel, occurs when Ishmael, steering the boat, gazes too long into the red flames of the try-pot fires. . . . (p. 488). My point is that the emotional rejection of Ahab's quest occurs first (two chapters before "The Try-Works." The order accentuates the fact that Ishmael and Ahab disagree mainly on matters of the heart.

> globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget: that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,--Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! (Pp. 348-49)

This scene is so important in establishing Ishmael's opposition to Ahab that it justifies including one more extract. The narrator adds a reflection on this outpouring of love towards his anonymous shipmates:

> Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever! For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country. . . . (P. 349)

Of course, these are the very felicities which Ahab rejects.

Because Melville does not let his two chief characters come into direct physical conflict, their relationship does not seem antagonistic. Instead, he creates a story with two protagonists.[26] I can make this point clearer by referring to W. J. Harvey's definition of "protagonists." They are

> those characters whose motivation and history are most fully established, who conflict and change as the story progresses, who engage our responses more fully and steadily, in a way more complex though not necessarily more vivid than other characters. They are the vehicles by which all the most interesting questions are raised; they evoke our beliefs, sympathies, revulsions; they incarnate the moral vision of

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[26]The equality of these two protagonists has been noted by many other commentators. For example, Hoffman says Moby-Dick can be either a "tragedy or a comic work (depending on whether we take Ahab or Ishmael as its hero) (p. 225). Seelye, likewise, contrasts the two as character types and in constructing the "ironic diagram" associates Ahab with lines and Ishmael with circles (Chapter Five).

> the world inherent in the total novel. In a sense they are end products; they are what the novel exists for. . . .[27]

Moby-Dick exists for both Ahab and Ishmael. But there is a dichotomy because Ahab is "the vehicle by which all the most interesting questions are raised" and Ishmael incarnates "the moral vision of the world inherent in the total novel."[28] This dichotomy is important because Melville uses it again in his best works. In the previous sentences one could (admittedly with some over-simplification) make the following substitutions for Moby-Dick, Ahab, and Ishmael: Benito Cereno, Cereno, and Delano; or Bartleby, Bartleby, and the lawyer; or Billy Budd, Budd, and Vere. The total moral vision inherent in all of these works is basically one which recognizes that evil exists in the world but refuses to be destroyed by that recognition. Ahab, Cereno, Bartleby, and Budd are all destroyed because of their over-reaction to evil. Their responses are basically "romantic" in that they reveal either a desire for perfectibility or a desire for change. Ishmael, Delano, the lawyer, and Vere all recognize that evil exists but their knowledge does not destroy them. In this recognition and the implied reconciliation to the fact that evil will always exist, these characters represent what Stern called classical conservatism. They all know, or learn, what Ishmael learns: "There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness" (p. 355). Cereno and Bartleby exhibit madness in being

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[27] W. J. Harvey, Character and the Novel (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1965), p. 56.

[28] Holman expresses a similar thought: "There is no necessity that Ishmael live in the action and plot of the novel; there is necessity that he survive inherent in the moral order of the universe in which Melville puts him. . . ." (p. 488).

terrorized by evil; Ahab and Budd, in believing they can eliminate it by striking at it. The technique of dual protagonists allows Melville to create great complexity in that he can present both a romantic and a classical vision of the world, but it is no accident that the characters with the classical view survive longer than the others.

In Moby-Dick the use of dual protagonists is frequently overlooked because one of them is such a dominating character, literally and figuratively. Captain Ahab has this stature because he is a truly heroic character and a charismatic leader. Although many critics talk of Melville's "heroes," they usually mean his protagonists. In Ahab, however, we have Melville's only character who has all of the traditional heroic traits. Peter L. Thorslev summarizes these in his study, The Byronic Hero:

> First of all the hero must be "bigger than life"; he must be above the common level, with greater powers, greater dignity, and a greater soul. He must have the qualities of an ordinary mortal so that we can see ourselves in him, but he is an idealization, a man whose capacities have been multiplied and enlarged so as to make him a giant among men. Furthermore, in spite of his tragic flaw, he must be "better," more "virtuous," than the average man.[29]

Thorslev goes on to show that this basically Aristotelian formula applies to the Romantic heroes, each of whom is "'bigger than life'--by virtue of his intellectual powers, his personal dignity, and his capacity for feeling--and all of them are certainly activated by a very self-conscious pride, even in their suffering."[30] As Thorslev notes on the first page of his book, Ahab belongs to this category of

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[29]Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes (Minneapolis: Minnesota Univ. Press, 1962), p. 186.

[30]Thorslev, p. 187.

heroes. His "flaw" is a conscious subordination of his "capacity for feeling." Ahab destroys the balance between head and heart--in Melville's eyes a serious failing for anybody, especially a leader of men.

Ahab's turning from normal emotions and concerns of the heart is present in just about every major scene, but it can be briefly traced in a few key episodes. Just after we first see Ahab, he throws away his pipe, a "thing that is meant for sereneness" (p. 114). He can no longer appreciate the natural beauty of a sunset: "[A]ll loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power . . ." (p. 147). The images of rejection come more rapidly near the end of the story. Ahab will not help Captain Gardiner of the Rachel search for his lost son (p. 435). In the famous "Symphony" chapter, just before the first day's chase, Ahab and Starbuck talk about their families in Nantucket. When Ahab tells Starbuck to stay on board during the chase for Moby-Dick because Ahab does not want him to risk the hazards, Starbuck replies: "[M]y Captain! noble soul! grand old heart, after all!" (p. 444). But Ahab rejects his heart, and even these reminiscences cannot turn him from his goal. All of these scenes (and more, such as Ahab's protection of the crazed Pip) show that Ahab has a large capacity for feeling and compassion--large enough to match his superior intelligence if he would only let it. But he rejects the demands of the heart, a conscious preference most clearly shown in the "complete man" he orders from the carpenter. In addition to a mammoth physique, Ahab would make his ideal man with "no heart at all" but with "an acre of fine brains" (p. 390).

Ahab, himself, has the brains, experience, competency, and insight into human nature to be a masterful leader. Melville does not spend much time simply showing Ahab's leadership, but he frequently uses the dramatic tension created by the fact that Ahab is the leader of both the public, legal mission of whaling and the private, illegal one of revenge. These tensions often involve Starbuck, second in command of the legal mission.

This conflict first surfaces in "The Quarter-deck." In this chapter Ahab excites the men by telling them, "This is what ye have shipped for, men! to chase that white whale . . . over all sides of earth . . ." (p. 143). Immediately Starbuck protests: "I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance." He also adds that the vengeance seems blasphemous. Ahab cooly wins his acquiescence by pointing out that the whole crew is for it. Then Ahab asks if Starbuck, "the best lance out of all Nantucket," will hang back (p. 144). This mixed appeal to Starbuck's pride and to his fear of appearing cowardly is a fine example of Ahab's intellectual and communicative superiority.

Ahab's dealings with Starbuck show his perceptiveness, but his handling of the men shows his charisma.[31] This chapter is full of

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[31]Robert J. House, "A 1976 Theory of Charismatic Leadership," in Leadership: The Cutting Edge, ed. James G. Hunt and Lar L. Larson (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1977), uses "charisma" to describe leaders who by force of their "personal abilities are capable of having profound and extraordinary effects on the followers. These effects include commanding loyalty and devotion to the leader and of inspiring followers to accept and execute the will of the leader without hesitation or question or regard to one's self interest" (p. 189). House also notes three attributes common to all charismatic leaders: "extremely high levels of self-confidence, dominance, and a strong conviction in the moral righteousness of his beliefs" (p. 193).

observations about the crew's reaction to Ahab's speech. The narrator shows them shouting agreement and "running closer to the excited old man" (p. 143). When Ahab orders grog all around, he then arranges the three harpooners on his one side, the three mates on the other, and the crew in a circle around them. The narrator says:

> [H]e stood for an instant searchingly eyeing every man of his crew. But those wild eyes met his, as the bloodshot eyes of the prairie wolves meet the eye of their leader, ere he rushes on at their head in the trail of the bison. . . . (P. 145)

The analogy with primal hunting instincts seems to highlight Ahab's charismatic leadership. A few pages later Ishmael implies this again when he admits that he, too, was swept up in a "wild mystical feeling":

> Here, then, was this grey-headed, ungodly old man, chasing with curses a Job's whale round the world, at the head of a crew, too, chiefly made up of mongrel renegades, and castaways, and cannibals--morally enfeebled also, by the incompetence of mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness in Starbuck . . . . How it was that they so abounidingly responded to the old man's ire--by what evil magic their souls were possessed, that at times his hate seemed almost theirs . . . how all this came to be . . . all this to explain, would be to dive deeper than Ishmael can go. (P. 162)

Jack Chase and Mad Jack display some charisma in that their men enthusiastically respond to them, but Ahab is the only major leader (with the possible exception of John Paul Jones) that Melville creates with this awesome, undefinable power to sway men's minds.

Even with that power, however, Ahab has to be wary of the challenge to his command that Starbuck represents. Some of the most exciting scenes in the story involve the tension inherent in a potential mutiny. The narrator shows Ahab's awareness of this in a very important chapter called "Surmises." In it Ahab reasons his way from

ecstacy to normalcy, from the fact that he has just received the sworn loyalty of the men to the recognition that

> he must still in a good degree continue true to the natural, nominal purpose of the Pequod's voyage; observe all customary usages; and not only that, but force himself to evince all his well known passionate interest in the general pursuit of his profession. (P. 184)

The key stages leading to this recognition reveal the subtleties of his leadership. First, Ahab is aware that, of all tools, "men are the most apt to get out of order" (p. 183). While he might have some control over Starbuck,

> still he knew that for all this the chief mate, in his soul, abhorred his captain's quest, and could he, would joyfully disintegrate himself from it, or even frustrate it. It might be that a long interval would elapse ere the White Whale was seen. During that long interval Starbuck would ever be apt to fall into open relapses of rebellion against his captain's leadership, unless some ordinary, prudential, circumstantial influences were brought to bear upon him. (P. 183)

Secondly, Ahab, with "superlative sense and shrewdness," knows that the "full terror of the voyage must be kept withdrawn into the obscure background (for few men's courage is proof against protracted meditation unrelieved by action)" (p. 183). Thirdly, he knows that "in times of strong emotion mankind disdain all base considerations" and that "such times are evanescent." Therefore Ahab decides to hunt other whales so that the men will have some prospect of cash. Linking the crew and the Crusaders, who plundered along their route, Ahab says, "Had they been strictly held to their one final and romantic object--that final and romantic object, too many would have turned from it in disgust" (p. 184). Finally, the narrator surmises one last reason for Ahab's decision. This passage is important because the narrator's interest in the problems of leadership has taken him

right into Ahab's deepest thoughts and fears:

> Having impulsively, it is probable, and perhaps somewhat prematurely revealed the prime but private purpose of the Pequod's voyage, Ahab was now entirely conscious that, in so doing, he had indirectly laid himself open to the unanswerable charge of usurpation; and with perfect impunity, both moral and legal, his crew if so disposed, and to that end competent, could refuse all further obedience to him, and even violently wrest from him the command. From even the barely hinted imputation of usurpation . . . Ahab must of course have been most anxious to protect himself. That protection could only consist in his own predominating brain and heart and hand, backed by a heedful, closely calculating attention to every minute atmospheric influence which it was possible for his crew to be subjected to. (P. 184)

Ahab's decision to hunt leads to a nearly violent conflict between himself and Starbuck. Later in the voyage, the casks of oil they have already earned start leaking. Starbuck informs the captain, but because repairs would take a week, Ahab refuses to stop. Then Starbuck directly challenges his decision in the name of the owners. Ahab gets so furious that he levels a musket at Starbuck and orders him out of the cabin shouting, "There is one God that is Lord over the earth, and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod" (p. 394). Soon afterwards, however, Ahab goes on deck, mutters to Starbuck, "Thou art but too good a fellow," and orders the delay to repair the casks. The narrator then offers this analysis of Ahab's decision:

> It may have been a flash of honesty in him; or mere prudential policy which, under the circumstances, imperiously forbade the slightest symptom of open disaffection, however transient, in the important chief officer of his ship. (P. 394)

Other incidents show Ahab's attempts to control the "atmospheric" influences on the crew. The destruction of the quadrant shows the dichotomy between Ahab's public and private mission. A normal commander, feeling responsibility for his men, would not destroy the best means of navigation. Ahab's actions fit perfectly with

his private mission--to avoid guidance from "on high" and to rely completely on himself--but his "frantic" actions also cause the crew to be "awestruck." Similarly, Ahab's refusal to put up lightning rods during a typhoon results in a build-up of St. Elmo's fire. This, mixed with Ahab's blasphemous words, drives the crew into a panic. All these deviations from normalcy drive Starbuck to thoughts of murdering Ahab. He reverses the earlier scene and levels a musket at the sleeping Ahab's bunk, but he cannot pull the trigger (pp. 422-23). After this, Starbuck does not threaten Ahab's command.

For most of the story, Ahab continually worries about the loyalty of all the crew, except the harpooners (p. 439). He keeps the crew with him until the excitement of the actual chase becomes enough of a motivator (p. 454). By the third day Ahab is so consumed by the intensity of the chase, he can only think of the two principals, himself and the whale. Just before Moby-Dick strikes the Pequod, Ahab reaches the height of his authoritarian pride (and the nadir of his compassion) as he says to the men in his boat, "Ye are not other men, but my arms and my legs; and so obey me" (p. 465).

Ahab draws our admiration because of his great powers and our partial sympathy because he misuses them. But, ultimately, Ahab is an enemy to the democracy of the forecastle, and his extreme self-reliance represents a danger to all around him. In his essay, "Heroism," Emerson claimed, "Self-trust is the essence of heroism."[32] Melville understood that, but he also knew that the distinction between American self-reliance and Greek pride could be very small

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[32]Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Heroism," Essays: First and Second Series (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1865; rpt. 1883), p. 237.

indeed. F. O. Matthiessen concludes American Renaissance by noting Moby-Dick shows "the tragedy of extreme individualism, the disasters of the selfish will, the agony of a spirit so walled within itself that it seemed cut off from the possibility of salvation."[33]

In this sense Melville criticizes his own great man and others such as Emerson and Carlyle who advocated a limitless great man.[34] In 1849 Melville said he had not read much Emerson,[35] but by 1850 he was fascinated by Carlyle and borrowed On Heroes and Hero-Worship that summer. But even Carlyle's paean to great leaders contains some of those classically conservative ideas with which much of Melville's writing shows complete agreement. Carlyle makes this observation:

> May we not say, moreover, while so many of our late Heroes have worked rather as revolutionary men, that nevertheless every Great Man, every genuine man, is by the nature of him a son of Order, not of Disorder? It is a tragical position for a true man to work in revolutions. He seems an anarchist. . . . His mission is Order; every man's is. He is here to make what was disorderly, chaotic, into a thing ruled, regular. . . . We are all born enemies of Disorder: it is tragical for us all to be concerned in image-breaking and down-pulling; for the Great Man, more a man than we, it is doubly tragical.[36]

Perhaps Ahab's anarchy is the source of his tragedy. He tries to

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[33]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941; rpt. 1968), p. 656.

[34]In The Heroic Ideal in American Literature (New York: The Free Press, 1971), Theodore C. Gross claims that a "criticism of Emersonian self-reliance" is "at the center of [Melville's] fiction . . ." (p. 34).

[35]Herman Melville to Evert A. Duyckinck, 3 March 1849, in Letters, pp. 78-80.

[36]Thomas Carlyle, "The Hero as King," On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, Vol. IV. of The Works of Thomas Carlyle, The Edinburgh Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), pp. 203-04.

impose his own vision of order on the world. And the world, as usual, will not have it.

Similarly, Carlyle recognizes that there are untrue forms, but adds: "It is meritorious to insist on forms; Religion and all else naturally clothes itself in forms. Everywhere the formed world is the only habitable one."[37] Ahab understands this need of forms for everybody else, but cannot tolerate them for himself. Ishmael tells us that Ahab was "by no means unobservant of the paramount forms and usages of the sea":

> Nor, perhaps, will it fail to be eventually perceived, that behind those forms and usages, as it were, he sometimes masked himself; incidentally making use of them for other and more private ends than they were legitimately intended to subserve. That certain sultanism of his brain, which had otherwise in a good degree remained unmanifested: through those forms that same sultanism became incarnate in an irresistible dictatorship. (P. 129)

Perhaps the thing that finally condemns Ahab is his stated desire to destroy all forms. He considers all visible objects "pasteboard masks" and wants to strike through them--in other words, he wants to destroy the very forms of nature if they are any hindrance to his total freedom (p. 144). In this over-reaching, he betrays himself and his followers and brings death to all except one--who alone escaped to warn us.

Ishmael distinguished between truly great men and men the world calls great--the latter being those who know how to use the forms:

> For be a man's intellectual superiority what it will, it can never assume the practical, available supremacy over other men, without the aid of some sort of external arts and entrenchments, always, in themselves, more or less paltry and base. This it is, that for ever keeps God's true princes of

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[37] Carlyle, p. 205.

> the Empire from the world's hustings; and leaves the highest honors that this air can give, to those men who become famous more through their infinite inferiority to the choice hidden handful of the Divine Inert, than through their undoubted superiority over the dead level of the mass. (P. 129)

This is surely Melville's sly comment on the impossibility of finding the "great man" that so many philosophers of his day were calling for.

In summary, the theme of leadership in Moby-Dick grows organically out of Melville's first five novels, even though the leader of the Pequod towers above the others because he has many attributes of the "great man." As in Redburn and White-Jacket, the ship captain is authoritarian and lacks compassion, or heart. But unlike those two books, and in a return to the form of the first three, in Moby-Dick the young protagonist rebels against his captain. The rebellion is mental rather than physical, and it affirms a classically conservative view of the world rather than youthful, romantic longings. The narrator says Ahab tries to control all the "atmospheric" influences to which his crew is subjected; but, even this "predominating brain and heart" fails: he cannot control Ishmael's mind.

Ishmael hints that this will be the case in the chapter preceding Ahab's public declaration of his intentions to hunt Moby-Dick. In describing the pleasure of mast-head duty to a "dreamy meditative man," Ishmael adds:

> And let me in this place movingly admonish you, ye shipowners of Nantucket! Beware of enlisting in your vigilant fisheries any lad with lean brow and hollow eye; given to unseasonable meditativeness. . . . Very often do the captains of such ships take those absent-minded young philosophers to task, upbraiding them with not feeling sufficient "interest" in the voyage; half-hinting that they are so hopelessly lost to all honorable ambition, as that in their secret souls they would rather not see whales than otherwise. (P. 139)

Ahab fails to control all the influences on Ishmael. Ishmael's emotional experience while squeezing the spermaceti causes him to reject Ahab's quest. And a few scenes later, his experience of gazing into the fire of the try-works leads him to an intellectual understanding of the madness of that quest. Ishmael rebels against Ahab's mutiny against the world. In doing so he reaffirms basic conservative values about the unchanging nature of man's existence. Without the heroic figure of Ahab, Ishmael would probably not have much of a story. But without Ishmael's reflections on Ahab's pursuit of his "final and romantic" object, without Ishmael's rebellion against Ahab's charismatic leadership, we would not have the complex totality of "moral vision" that makes Moby-Dick one of the world's great books.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESTORING THE BALANCE

In the remaining novels and the short stories there is no particular pattern to Melville's concern with leaders and leadership. The most significant thing to notice in these works is the high quality Melville achieves when he uses a leader as a protagonist (or as one of the dual protagonists). The introduction to this dissertation discusses a break in Melville's canon after the first six novels. My own interpretation of the dichotomy is this: Melville's best work before Moby-Dick focuses on a follower's relationship to interesting things, and his best work after the masterpiece focuses on a leader's relationship to interesting people. This generalization suggests two things: (1) that Melville's "Everyman" was no longer the rebellious young innocent but a more or less conservative older man trapped between the realities of his situation and a perception of forces beyond tangible reality; and (2) that Melville's best work had as its central object not simply the life of a protagonist but a particular relationship between the central character and some special thing or some unique person.

The first point will be discussed with the short stories; the second involves a theory about Melville's titles. His best works are not those named after the central character. For example, Omoo, Redburn, Israel Potter, and Clarel are all interesting and have some flashes of brilliance, but there is no general recognition that they belong with Melville's best. His most highly regarded works specify

in the title the thing or person to which the central character has a unique relationship. For example, Typee and Omoo are both basically South Sea adventures, but Tommo's special relationship to the "paradise" of Typee Valley becomes the focal point of that story. This focus gives Typee greater intellectual depth, which is probably the main reason it is generally more highly regarded than Omoo.[1] Similarly, White-Jacket usually receives more praise than Redburn. While both are initiation stories, the relationship between the central character and the special garment named in the title gives superior delineation to the plot, character, and theme of the military novel. Mardi attempts to show the relationship of both Taji and Media to the "world" of Mardi. The book is praised because it attempts so much breadth and depth, but it fails because the relationships of each main character to Mardi and to each other are not so clearly presented as in the best works. And, as mentioned in the last chapter, Moby-Dick achieves its great complexity because it focuses on a relationship to a relationship: it not only presents the bond between one protagonist and the thing named in the title, it shows the reaction of another protagonist to that bond.

Except for The Encantadas, Melville names the rest of his lengthy works for interesting people--not things. In terms of recent critical praise Pierre and The Confidence-Man seem to be legitimate exceptions to my theory, but the other highly praised works after Moby-Dick support it. "Bartleby," "Benito Cereno," and Billy Budd

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[1]The essence of this distinction can be found in D. H. Lawrence's chapter on Typee and Omoo, Studies in Classic American Literature (1923; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1964).

share with each other the fact that the central concern in each story is a leader's relationship to the uniqueness of the title character.

In his last forty years Melville's concern with leaders results in great art, but overall the theme of leadership becomes, as Nicholas Canaday said of the theme of authority, more "diffuse."[2] In terms of this study, the last three novels are distinguished by a lack of formal leaders. The major exception is John Paul Jones in the central episode of Israel Potter. The short stories reveal a transition to an older and more settled narrator/central character, and Melville achieves greatness when he makes this persona a leader in a clearly defined leadership situation.

I

Leadership is conspicuously absent in Pierre (1852) and The Confidence-Man (1857). In one sense these two stories can only develop the way they do because there are no leaders to hinder the protagonists or no clearly defined leadership responsibilities on the protagonists to make them more conventional. However, in Israel Potter (1855 in book form), Melville gets a chance to show his version of the leadership of three American Revolutionary War "heroes."

The first of these three novels also mentions Revolutionary War heroes, but they are simply ancestors of Pierre. In some ways this protagonist is a youthful Ahab, an idealist who tries to follow his own course no matter what the rest of the world thinks or says. It is easier to sympathize with (but more difficult to admire) the young man,

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[2]Nicholas Canaday, Jr., in the Preface to his Melville and Authority, Univ. of Florida Monographs, No. 28 (Gainsville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1968).

however, because his destruction is caused by the heart predominating over the head. He tries to do "good" as he sees it, and also destroys himself and those around him. In the terms Melville uses in the story, he tries to follow chronometrical (absolutist or other worldly) standards of wisdom rather than horological (this world's) standards. Ahab could use horological wisdom to control his crew until it was time to reveal the full terror of his chronometrical pursuit of the "final and romantic object." But Pierre, in his immaturity, had neither the intellectual force nor the discipline to use horological standards to achieve his ultimate (chronometrical) goal of protecting Isabel.

In Pierre leadership is primarily a motif which Melville uses to establish Pierre's background.[3] Both Pierre's paternal and maternal grandfathers were generals in the Revolutionary War. The narrator says, "on both sides he sprung from heroes."[4] At one point Mrs. Glendinning finds her father-in-law's baton and thinks of her son, "This is his inheritance--this symbol of command" (p. 20). This reflection troubles her because she wants Pierre to remain "sweetly docile," and yet she knows that part of his nature is that of a warrior

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[3]Since Pierre's grandfathers seem to bear some correspondences to Melville's (Major Thomas Melville and General Peter Ganesvoort), this connection might indicate one source of Melville's interest in leadership and command. Other family members who fostered this interest throughout Melville's lifetime would be uncle John De Wolf (ship captain), cousin Guert Gansevoort (of the U.S.S. Somers), and brother Thomas (ship captain).

[4]Herman Melville, Pierre: or the Ambiguities, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1971), p. 20. All further references to this work appear in the text.

and leader. She ends these thoughts by praying that "he show his heroicness in some smooth way of favoring fortune, not be called out to be a hero of some dark hope forlorn . . ." (p. 20).

Some of the persistence and self-reliance of the hero characterizes Pierre's doomed effort, but there is very little leadership. In one sense Pierre is a leader; he has a mission and followers (Isabel, Lucy, and Delly). But the situation is not a formal one because the authority for Pierre's acts is not clearly defined, and the goal becomes confused when the physical attraction for Isabel begins to intrude upon the original purity of his intentions. Also, to the extent Pierre worships Isabel, or is tormented by her, she exerts more influence over him than he does over her. Pierre is rightly praised for its probing of psychological depths, but it does not add much to our understanding of Melville's attitude towards leaders because it does not involve a formal leadership situation.

One of these situations exists in The Confidence-Man--somebody is taking the Fidele down the river (so to speak). However, we never see the captain of the riverboat. In the usual interpretation of this story, of course, the captain represents God--just as the confidence-man represents the Devil. Melville may, or may not, be commenting on the captain's leadership (or existence) by not letting him appear in the story.

In the context of the story, however, a captain is presumed to exist. He, or rather his office, is mentioned on the first page. A poster near the captain's office offers a reward for the capture of a

"mysterious impostor."[5] This notice establishes a basic tension between these two characters. In the last chapter the steward says that the captain has commanded that one lamp be kept burning all night. At the end of the story, the confidence-man extinguishes it. The story is thus framed by this tension between the mutable passenger and the invisible captain. Extinguishing the light is the most explicit sign of this contest, although the mysterious stranger has certainly been disturbing the captain's passengers all day.

The closest the cosmopolitan, known as Goodman near the end of the book, comes to meeting the captain is in the third chapter from the end. Goodman is playing his game on one of the ship's "officials," the barber. This contest has been anticipated from the first chapter. In it the barber's placard (which hangs just three doors from the captain's office) says, "No Trust." It is contrasted with the confidence-man's slate containing charitable sayings (p. 3). More structural symmetry is achieved by having Goodman con the barber into taking down this sign. To do it Goodman agrees to make good any loss the barber might incur because of the new policy of trusting men. The barber also insists on a written agreement which they both sign, and then he proposes "both should go together to the captain, and give the document into his hands" (p. 202). The confidence-man reacts "with some surprise and concern":

> "Why, barber," said the cosmopolitan, "this don't show the right spirit; for me, I have confidence in the captain purely because he is a man; but he shall have nothing to do with our affair. . . ." (P. 202)

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[5]Herman Melville, The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade, ed. Hershel Parker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1971), p. 1. All further references to this work appear in the text.

Goodman not only avoids a confrontation with the supreme authority in the microcosm of the Fidele, he also, in the religious interpretation of the story, makes a telling comment on the divinity of the God/man crux of Christianity.

In this novel the importance of leaders and leadership in a formal sense lies in the absence of a competent leader who, with a balance of heart and head, might have been able to foil the confidence-man. This confrontation would have made a grand episode in this voyage if Melville had pictured the Fidele's captain as a competent leader. But he could not, or did not, and the confidence-man, consequently, has quite an outing.

The other novel of the 1850's is Israel Potter. In it Melville does show leaders in action, one of them in the formal sense of commanding a ship. Throughout the story Melville portrays Israel as a follower (although he becomes a subordinate leader under John Paul Jones). Basically Israel is an "everyman" whose entire life is molded by forces outside his control. Some of these forces are the strong personalities he meets, and the story is most interesting when Melville focuses on Israel's encounters with Benjamin Franklin, Ethan Allen, and John Paul Jones.

In these portraits Melville stresses Franklin's head and Allen's heart. Jones is the most balanced leader so far, but Melville also shows him with certain deficiencies which makes his heroism seem very human. Since the portraits of Franklin and Allen are relatively short and, on the subject of leadership, make one clear point each, I will discuss them first. In Progress Into Silence, Alan Lebowitz says, "From Franklin Israel learns prudence, though the practice of it

does him little good. . . . From Ethan Allen he learns to be a captive in a strange land, and it is this lesson that ultimately prevails."[6] Both lessons do him some good, but the last one seems to prevail because after his extraordinary adventures with these three heroes, Israel remains a "captive" himself for forty-five years.

The narrator of Israel Potter acknowledges that he can only present a limited view of Franklin and chooses to show the wise man's "benevolent irony" and "innocent mischief."[7] Franklin's lessons of "prudence" mischievously deprive Israel of the luxuries of Paris. Under the guise of protecting his young countryman, Franklin removes the Otard, the sugar, the cologne, and the potential services of an attractive chambermaid. As Franklin's "wisdom" overrules Israel's inclinations time after time, Israel finally laments, "Every time he comes in he robs me . . . with an air all the time, *too*, as if he were making me presents" (p. 78). Soon Franklin sends Israel back to England on a mission, and the portrait of the elder statesman is concluded.

This comic portrait emphasizes qualities of the head, and is balanced near the end of Israel's story by a brief glimpse of Ethan Allen. This one chapter sketch (Chapter 21) of the military officer in captivity stresses Allen's courage and daring--his heart. In short order Allen, although in rags and in chains, browbeats a British

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[6]Alan Lebowitz, Progress Into Silence: A Study of Melville's Heroes (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1970), p. 173).

[7]Herman Melville, Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile, intro. Alfred Kazin (New York: Warner Paperback Library Edition, 1974), p. 72. All further references to this work appear in the text.

officer into silence; he charms some ladies so much they send him wine and linen during the rest of his captivity; he rebukes a pretentious country squire by reminding him of the American victory at Ticonderoga; and when one of the privates hits him with a sword, Allen grabs it with his teeth and then throws it over the crowd. In the next chapter, Melville says Allen has "a heart plump as Coeur de Lion's" and praises his "wild, heroic sort of levity" (p. 195). Interestingly, Melville also feels the need to defend Allen's bravado from overly-refined critics:

> Parlor-men, dancing-masters, the graduates of the Albe Beligarde, may shrug their laced shoulders at the boisterousness of Allen in England. True, he stood upon no punctilios with his jailers; for where modest gentlemanhood is all on one side, it is a losing affair. . . . When among wild beasts, if they menace you, be a wild beast. (Pp. 196-97)

While he is admiring Allen's heart, Melville is also stressing that his survival was an accommodation to the realities of the situation.

These sketches of Franklin and Allen do not directly address their leadership techniques; rather they are simply one dimensional views of famous leaders. In terms of this study, the sketches are interesting because Melville presents the head qualities of prudence and accumulated wisdom in one and the heart qualities of courage and bravado in the other. In terms of the story, they are interesting because they flank a central historical figure who combines these qualities. The centrality of John Paul Jones is evident not only as the highlight of Israel's life but in the story's construction. Of the twenty-six chapters, Jones is the subject of the tenth and eleventh, and Israel sails with him in the fourteenth through the twentieth chapters.

The keynote to Jones's character is his ability to combine unlike qualities. For each of the three historical figures, Melville summarizes what it is that makes him particularly American. Of Franklin he says, "Jack of all trades, master of each and mastered by none--the type and genius of his land. Franklin was everything but a poet" (p. 72). In opposition to Franklin's diplomatic reserve and pragmatic successes, Allen has a "barbaric disdain for adversity" and is

> frank, bluff, companionable as a Pagan, convivial, a Roman, hearty as a harvest. His spirit was essentially Western; and herein is his peculiar Americanism; for the Western spirit is, or will yet be (for no other is, or can be), the true American one. (P. 195)

Jones is a unique combination of these two types. Melville says, "America is, or may yet be, the Paul Jones of nations" because it is "intrepid, unprincipled, reckless, predatory, with boundless ambition, civilized in externals but a savage at heart" (p. 159).

To display this paradoxical figure, Melville needed a character who was relatively free of the normal constraints imposed on men and who had not only the inclination but the authority to turn his ideas into acts. As he did with another special character, Ahab, Melville makes him the leader of a clearly defined, tightly controlled hierarchy. Jones, like Ahab, is a "doer," an active man who makes things happen. The other leaders in the great stories after Moby-Dick do not display so much initiative.

Melville clearly intends for us to think of Jones's heroism as a balance of heart and head:

> Seldom has regicidal daring been more strangely coupled with octogenarian prudence, than in many of the predatory enterprises of Paul. It is this combination of apparent incompatibilities which ranks him among extraordinary warriors. (P. 134)

This praise is somewhat qualified by the phrase "in many of," but this is consistent with Melville's post-Moby-Dick concentration on realistic, human possibilities. Jones is successful, but he does not succeed all of the time--he is a very human hero.

Some times his failures are his own fault, and sometimes the fault is beyond his control. When the narrator analyzes one facet of Jones's leadership, he mentions the factor of chance, or bad luck:

> Like Peter the Great, he went into the smallest details, while still possessing a genius competent to plan the aggregate. But oversee as one may, it is impossible to guard against carelessness in subordinates. (P. 135)

But one of the great things about Jones as a leader is his ability to overcome adverse conditions. His serendipity is a combination of luck and pluck, of intelligence and fortitude. For example, while raiding Whitehaven the small fire they need to light their torches goes out and no matches are to be had. With a good leader's perspicacity, Jones immediately dispatches Israel to get some fire. And Israel, also "long experienced in all sorts of shifts and emergencies," succeeds while Jones reorganizes his plan to adjust to the new, and more hazardous conditions. The raid is successful, and the narrator again turns to oxymoronic description to analyze it:

> Not a splinter was made, not a drop of blood spilled throughout the affair. The intentional harmlessness of the result, as to human life, was only equalled by the desperate courage of the deed. It formed, doubtless, one feature of the compassionate contempt of Paul towards the town, that he took such paternal care of their lives and limbs. (P. 141)

He concludes by noting that the insult to Britain was greater than the physical damage because the latter was frequently "abated by the magnanimity of a chivalrous, however unprincipled foe" (p. 141).

This episode also reveals, in action, the bond between Jones

and Israel which had earlier been established in their conversation. For one thing, they share an affinity for the most maligned of intellectual word-games, punning (pp. 127 and 156). But Jones also recognizes in Israel a kindred spirit:

> His wild, lonely heart, incapable of sympathizing with cuddled natures made humdrum by long exemption from pain, was yet drawn towards a being, who in desperation of friendlessness, something like his own, had so fiercely waged battle against tyrannical odds. (P. 124)

When Israel declares his hatred for the British "at the memory of all he has suffered," Jones says, "By heaven, you hate so well, I love ye. You shall be my confidential man; stand sentry at my cabin door; sleep in the cabin; steer my boat; keep by my side whenever I land" (p. 125).[8]

Israel does keep by Jones's side at Whitehaven. Not only do both know what has to be done, they know how to do it. At one crisis, when it looks as if the townspeople might extinguish the blaze before any real damage is done, both show a kind of heart that goes beyond any kind of rational calculation (although one can reason afterwards about the effects of such actions). At this threat of failure, Jones, "bidding his men stand fast, ran to their front, and, advancing about thirty feet, presented his own pistol at now tumultous Whitehaven" (p. 140). Seconds later Israel rushes past Jones, and his mad appearance panics the crowd. It is as if Mad Jack were captain and Jack Chase, his quartermaster, because Israel does reveal considerable leadership during his time with Jones. It is during this time, also,

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[8]Lebowitz says, "From John Paul Jones [Israel] momentarily absorbs a tigerish warrior's energy and daring, as well as an implacable hatred of the enemy (p. 173). Rather than saying Israel is just a reflector of Jones's qualities, I would suggest that Jones's charismatic leadership brings out some of Israel's repressed qualities.

that Israel seems most alive and happy--and least downtrodden.

Jones is not a perfect leader, and Melville carefully shows us his human failings. On the intellectual side his faults are vanity and, more seriously, an inability to perceive subtleties. Both his vanity and one facet of his leadership appear in the narrator's initial description of him:

> He was a rather small, elastic, swarthy man, with an aspect as of a disinherited Indian Chief in European clothes. An unvanquishable enthusiasm, intensified to perfect sobriety, couched in his savage, self-possessed eye. He was elegantly and somewhat extravagantly dressed as a civilian; he carried himself with a rustic, barbaric jauntiness, strangely dashed with a superinduced touch of the Parisian salon. . . . A wonderful atmosphere of proud friendlessness and scornful isolation invested him. Yet there was a bit of the poet as well as the outlaw in him, too. A cool solemnity of intrepidity sat on his lip. He looked like one who of purpose sought out harm's way. He looked like one who never had been and never would be, a subordinate. (P. 81)

This striking appearance is at least partly calculated because he is very image conscious. Jones tells Franklin, "I will mount not sink. I live but for honor and glory. Give me, then, something honorable and glorious to do, and something famous to do it with" (p. 83). When first introduced to Israel, Jones asks, "Did your shipmates talk much of me?" (p. 83). His conscious vanity is also revealed in the following chapter. Jones, thinking he is unwatched, stares at himself in the mirror and glances "ironically" at the laced, ruffled coat-sleeve which covered his tattooed arm (p. 89).

The "bit of the poet" distinguishes him from Franklin and appears most frequently in his flamboyant similes for his own prowess: "Give me the Indien, and I will rain down on wicked England like fire on Sodom" (p. 82). Franklin's "philosophic repose" is disturbed by Jones. While admiring the "unmistakable spirit of the man," Franklin

does not like the "apparent measureless boasting" (p. 82). Another clear distinction between the two is made when Jones cries out in frustration, "Everything is lost through this shillyshalling timidity, called prudence . . ." (p. 83). Although he exercises this quality in his own calling, he does not have the patience to see prudence carried out in diplomacy.

Jones's inability to deal with subtleties is his most serious intellectual flaw. Franklin cannot promise Jones a command but assures him "that he would immediately exert himself to the utmost to procure for him some enterprise which should come up to his merits" (p. 84). To this diplomatically ambiguous comment, Jones responds, "Thank you for your franknes . . . . frank myself, I love to deal with a frank man. You, Doctor Franklin, are true and deep, and so you are frank" (p. 84). To this remark Franklin "sedately smiled, a queer incredulity just lurking in the corner of his mouth" (p. 84).[9]

This kind of misunderstanding of human nature, this projecting of his own characteristics on other people, is Jones's main flaw. The potential gullibility Jones displays in this, our first view of him, manifests itself in our last one. The incident which separates Israel from Jones is caused by Jones falling prey to a hoax. An enemy ship surrenders and claims half her men are dead. When Jones stops firing and prepares to board, Israel grabs hold of the enemy's boom. The British ship suddenly fills her sails and gains both an unbeatable

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[9]Jones is obviously enjoying his puns on Franklin's name, but the import of his compliment would bring the same kind of smile to Melville's lips as it did to Franklin's.

advantage and an extra passenger.[10]

Jones's flaw is not a damning one, even though it has serious consequences for the protagonist. Melville does not hold Jones responsible for every twist of fate or run of bad luck. These things happen in the world of action, and sometimes one loses. Jones's ability to keep going in spite of human carelessness and disinterested nature draws the narrator's praise. When Jones is put in charge of a group of jealous, "conceited commanders" who subvert his mission (one even fires on him), he still succeeds. Of this command the narrator says:

> The expedition was full of the elements of insubordination and failure. Much bitterness and agony resulted to a spirit like Paul's. But he bore up, and though in many particulars the sequel more than warranted his misgivings, his soul still refused to surrender. (P. 152)

While Jones's inadequacies as a thinker prevent us from seeing him as an *omnipotent* or god-like, it is clear that Melville still intended to portray Jones as a human hero. And, of course, part of that heroism stems from his heart. The perceptive Franklin appreciates some of these qualities immediately. For all of Jones's boasting, Franklin is "not uninfluenced by the uncompromising spirit of his guest" and knows "that however unpleasant a trait in conversation, or in the transaction of civil affairs, yet in war this very quality was invaluable . . ." (p. 84).

Jones's heart is exemplified in his charisma. Just before Israel first joins Jones, he is an impressed seaman on a revenue cutter

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[10]Lebowitz interprets this incident as a telling blow to Jones's heroism because it reveals the kind of prudence which causes him "to retreat from an apparently difficult battle, leaving his overzealous follower alone on an enemy ship" (p. 178). But Jones is not unwilling to fight; his gullibility (or excessive compassion) is the real cause of his losing this fight.

with three British officers. Jones challenges the cutter, and Israel overcomes all three Britishers. When Jones's lieutenant boards the cutter, he finds only Israel and tells him to come aboard Captain Paul's ship. Israel says, "I thought that was [Jones's] voice hailing. It was Captain Paul's voice that somehow put me up to this deed." The lieutenant replies, "Captain Paul is the devil for putting men up to be tigers" (p. 122).

The quality of Jones's heart is unquestioned in every scene but one. While in full pursuit of a British ship, Jones sails into the shadow of the crag of Ailsa, a rock one mile in circumference and a thousand feet high. The narrator says:

> While the ship was yet under the shadow, and each seaman's face shared in the general eclipse, a sudden change came over Paul. He issued no more sultanical orders. He did not look so elate as before. At length he gave the command to discontinue the chase. Turning about, they sailed southward. (P. 132)

When Israel asks Jones about calling off the chase "rather queerly," Jones replies it was not any fear of the other ship, "nor of King George, which made me turn my heel; it was yon cock of the walk"--refering to the crag. Alan Lebowitz says of this uncharacteristic behavior:

> The incident, though brief, is extraordinarily evocative and relevant. The image of the crag has throughout the novels indicated the transcendent force against which the potential hero must test himself.[11]

The incident is relevant to Lebowitz's thesis that Melville's heroes are "progressing into silence," i.e. that heroism is a useless, if not impossible, attribute in Melville's view of the world. Perhaps the

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[11]Lebowitz, p. 178.

scene reveals a moment when Jones's prudence unnecessarily exceeds his fortitude, but this is the only time. It never happens when he is engaged with a known enemy--a tangible, not a transcendental, enemy.

The climax of Jones's portrait is the battle between the Bonhomme Richard and the Serapis. In it Jones brings his intellect and fortitude together to outfight a bigger ship with twice as much firepower. He also has to overcome one of his French "allies" firing four broadsides into the Bonhomme Richard and the unauthorized release of 100 British prisoners in his own hold. The narrator again mentions his charisma:

> Meanwhile, determined Paul flew hither and thither like the meteoric corposant-ball, which shiftingly dances on the tips and verges of ships rigging in storms. Wherever he went, he seemed to cast a pale light on all faces. Blacked and burnt, his scotch bonnet was compressed to a gun-wad on his head. His Parisian coat, with its gold-laced sleeve laid aside, disclosed to the full the blue tattooing on his arm, which sometimes in fierce gestures streamed in the haze of the cannonade, cabalistically terrific as the charmed standard of Satan. Yet his frenzied manner was less a testimony of his own internal commotion than intended to inspirit and madden his men, some of whom seeing him, in transports of intrepidity stripped themselves to their trousers, exposing their naked bodies to the as naked shot. (Pp. 167-68)

The vicious battle ends, of course, in an American victory and is ultimately a tribute to John Paul Jones. The narrator takes a gracious note of the losing captain: "It is, therefore, honor to him as a man, and not reproach to him as an officer, that to stay such carnage, Captain Pearson, of the Serapis, with his own hands hauled down his colors" (p. 171). If this comment is meant to be a reproach to Jones, then perhaps Jones's own words in another context can be his defense: "It cannot be too poignantly lamented that, in the profession of arms, the officer of fine feelings and genuine sensibility

should be sometimes necessitated to public actions which his own private heart cannot approve" (p. 144). Perhaps there is no defense for such "inhuman" human action except to question, as the narrator does, if civilization is just an "advanced state of barbarism" (p. 172). Nevertheless, history tends to be a study of victorious heroes, and even Israel's "history" focuses on three successes of the Revolution. In the realistic depiction of this battle, there is still an element of wonder about a captain who, with his ship sinking and half his crew dead, can immortalize himself by shouting, "I have not yet begun to fight," and then proving it.

Melville gives depth to the portrait of Jones by showing some of his failings, but their purpose is to contrast with the highlights of his achievements. He reveals Jones's character by showing him in action as an American leader: Jones invites Israel to sit in his cabin explaining, "I'm a democratic sort of sea-king" (p. 123); he runs daring raids and displays great tenacity in the Bonhomme Richard. Still Melville realizes there are problems for some readers in presenting a hero with faults--of giving half-legendary heroes human foibles. But in his realistic mood, he does it anyway and warns the reader of the dangers of judging real, physical people by metaphysical standards:

> Much subtle casuistry has been expended upon the point, whether Paul Jones was a knave or a hero, or a union of both. But war and warriors, like politics and politicians, like religion and religionists, admit of no metaphysics. (P. 130)

In Israel Potter Melville clearly sees John Paul Jones as a "union of both." The trend towards balance can be seen in his other central

characters who are leaders--they temper their idealism with humanity and limit their compassion to the realm of reality.

II

In the shorter fiction of this period only two works are directly relevant to Melville's attitude towards leaders and leadership: "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno." In both the central character is in a position of leadership, and in both the reader experiences the development of the story through the baffled common sense of the central character. The "moral vision" of the normal world is represented by the leader, but the "most interesting questions" are raised by the abnormal, or rather, extraordinary, title characters.

In writing his short stories, Melville shows his age. Although none of the novels after Moby-Dick uses first-person narration, most of the short stories do. While writing these stories, Melville approached and passed the midpoint of his "threescore and ten" years. It is probably no coincidence that most stories are told by an older, more domesticated man. Some examples are "The Apple-Tree Table," "Jimmy Rose," "I and My Chimney," and, of course, "Bartleby." In these, and other stories, the narrators evince a conservative or classical view of life in that they are more interested in accepting or understanding things than in trying to change them.[12] The contrast

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[12] In his introduction to Melville's Short Fiction: 1853-1856 (Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1977), William B. Dillingham discusses this shift in narrator characterization in terms of Melville making his work acceptable to the magazine readers. This reasonable argument does not necessarily contradict mine even when Dillingham identifies the narrator of "I and My Chimney" as being "of the breed of Ahab" (p. 12). This narrator's obsessiveness is really used to defend the status quo, and the whole dilemma is presented with a sense of humor which implies acceptance of the human condition.

with most of the pre-Moby-Dick narrators is obvious. Even in the short stories that have a young first-person narrator, such as "The Fiddler" and "The Happy Failure," the point of the story concerns adjusting to life's disappointments rather than rebellion against its injustices. Melville, his implied authors, and the narrators all seem more willing to take life as it is--in surviving and making sense out of experience. This conservative bent, which becomes even more apparent in the poetry, is especially applicable to the central characters in "Bartleby," "Benito Cereno," and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, Billy Budd.[13]

In opposition to the active, task-oriented leadership of Ahab and John Paul Jones, the lawyer in "Bartleby" is a reserved, people-oriented type of leader. This style fits with both his "unambitious" nature and his conviction that "the easiest way of life is best."[14] It is also probably more appropriate to his business, which is conducted in the "cool tranquillity of a snug retreat."

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[13]Kingsley Widmer stressed the importance of treating these three works as "closely related" in The Ways of Nihilism: A Study of Herman Melville's Short Novels (Los Angeles: The California State Colleges, 1970). While we both agree on Melville's anti-authoritarianism, we differ on Melville's basic beliefs on the necessity of authority. Widmer says, "As I see them, the tales perplex our whole sense of benevolent rationalism, ending in its denial. Thus they must be read not only as philosophical tales but as attacks on our prevalent views of order and legitimacy and authority" (p. 7). Melville obviously saw the potential of injustice in these "prevalent views," but I am suggesting that he would also ask, What else is there? The conservative, classical tendency I have been tracing through Melville's prose and the thoughts expressed in many of his poems indicate that Melville would not consider nihilism or anarchy an acceptable alternative.

[14]Herman Melville, "Bartleby," in Billy Budd and Other Tales, afterword Willard Thorp (New York: The New American Library, 1961), p. 104. All further references to this work appear in the text.

Being people-oriented, the lawyer is willing to overlook the foibles of his employees--so long as they contribute to the "mission" of the office. After a lengthy discussion of Turkey's "blots," the lawyer adds:

> Nevertheless, as he was in many ways a most valuable person to me, and all the time before twelve o'clock, meridian, was the quickest, steadiest creature, too, accomplishing a great deal of work in a style not easily to be matched--for these reasons I was willing to overlook his eccentricities. . . . (P. 106)

Likewise, he says of his other clerk: "[W]ith all his failings and the annoyances he caused me, Nippers . . . was a very useful man to me: wrote a neat, swift hand; and . . . he always dressed in a gentlemanly sort of way, and so, incidentally, reflected credit upon my chambers" (p. 198). The lawyer is not only conscious of, but pleased with, the fact that the situation is workable because the "eccentricities" of his two copiers do not occur at the same time: "This was a good natural arrangement, under the circumstances" (p. 109). Where a less tolerant leader might try to alter the circumstances or look for equally good copyists with fewer failings, this lawyer is content.

Of course, in describing his working relationship with his employees, the lawyer reveals something of himself as well. He is "eminently <u>safe</u>"; his grand points are prudence and method; he can control his temper; and he is successful. The last point is important because we measure leaders both by what they are trying to do and by how well they succeed. Although the lawyer's goals are modest and his methods mild, he is successful--partly because his style of leadership matches the situation.

A people-oriented leader can be as demanding as a task-oriented

one, and the lawyer mentions this facet of his style twice before Bartleby challenges his authority. One sign of his success is receiving the Master in Chancery office which increases his workload: "Not only must I push the clerks already with me, but I must have additional help" (p. 110). After requiring more work from Turkey and Nippers, he hires Bartleby. In the scene of Bartleby's first refusal, the lawyer shows both that he is demanding and that he sets an example by working hard:

> [B]eing much hurried to complete a small affair I had in hand, I abruptly called to Bartleby. In my haste and natural expectancy of instant compliance, I sat with my head bent over the original on my desk, and my right hand . . . extended with the copy, so that, immediately upon emerging from his retreat, Bartleby might snatch it and proceed to business without the least delay. P. 111)

Obviously, Bartleby thwarts the lawyer's "natural" expectation when he replies, "I would prefer not to." The lawyer realizes this challenge to his authority immediately, and his first reaction is one of surprise and anger.

To show that Melville is sympathetic to the lawyer as well as Bartleby, it might be useful to catalog Bartleby's "sins" as an employee. Although no contract is mentioned in the hiring of Bartleby, the pallid clerk has violated the written or unwritten rules of an employer-employee relationship by refusing to comply with the lawyer's reasonable demands. He refuses to do the work he was hired to do. To stress this point Melville has the lawyer put the problem in exactly those terms: "You are decided, then, not to comply with my request--a request made according to common usage and common sense?" (p. 113). When Bartleby answers yes, the lawyer has a perfect legal right to fire him. Considering the other offenses Bartleby commits

against his employer, it would have been a wise thing to do. Bartleby disrupts the other workers and lowers the morale of the office. He trespasses, and, eventually, begins to destroy the reputation and livelihood of his employer, even after the lawyer has gone out of his way to help him. A less sensitive, more task-oriented, and decisive employer would fire Bartleby in a minute.

But the prudent lawyer is not that decisive, and he has shown a willingness to put up with his employees' eccentricities as long as they can contribute to the work of the office. It is a credit to the lawyer's humanity that, even in shock, he sees that Bartleby is special: "Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other words, had there been anything ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises" (p. 110).

In spite of this perceptiveness and his charitable acts towards Bartleby, some critics see the lawyer as an insensitive lout who somehow fails Bartleby. Ray B. Browne, for example, says: "The lawyer is man in authority, like Captain Vere in Billy Budd, who despite his common bond with and professed sympathy for the common man cannot fully understand or empathize with him."[15] Browne's italics suggest that being a "man in authority" provides a clue to the lawyer's inability to save Bartleby.

There are two objections to this inference. First, Bartleby, in his passive way, wills his own destruction, and who, in or out of authority, could "fully understand" or stop him? We can speculate

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[15]Ray B. Browne, Melville's Drive to Humanism (Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue Univ. Studies, 1971), p. 167.

about why Bartleby acts this way (one of the "interesting questions"), but like all of Melville's driven characters who are unable. or unwilling, to learn that there is a "woe that is madness," he will die--he must die. Secondly, the lawyer actually violates some of the responsibilities of his authority to help Bartleby. He has a responsibility to distribute the workload of the office evenly, but he lets Bartleby get away with doing less than what would normally be expected of him--a fact not lost on the other workers (p. 114). The lawyer also has a responsibility to himself and his other employees to do what he can to protect the business, but he almost lets his concern for Bartleby override that point. Just before he decides to move his chambers, the lawyer summarizes Bartleby's offenses: "[D]enying my authority; and perplexing my visitors; and scandalizing my professional reputation: and casting a general gloom over the premises . . ." (p. 131).

Why does the lawyer allow Bartleby to do all this: In terms of the simple matrix I have been using to discuss leaders, he lets his heart overrule his head. But by the end of the story, he has restored enough of a balance to save himself from the certain destruction that an unmodified commitment to Bartleby's preservation would have entailed.

After the shock of discovering that Bartleby makes his home in the office, the lawyer has a "prudential feeling" that he can no longer be ruled by his heart;

> My first emotions had been those of pure melancholy and sincerest pity: but just in proportion as the forlornness of Bartleby grew and grew to my imagination, did that same melancholy merge into fear, that pity into repulsion. So true it is, and so terrible too, that up to a certain point the thought or sight

> of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent self-ishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul be rid of it. . . . I might give alms to the body, but [Bartleby's] body did not pain him--it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach. (Pp. 121-22)

At this point (halfway through the story) the lawyer perceives the hard, realistic truth of the matter, but is unable to act upon it.

He starts toward balance when he decides to fire Bartleby. When he tries, however, he says, "I strangely felt something superstitious knocking at my heart, and forbidding me carry out my purpose . . ." (p. 123). His heart dominates again. As he continues to rationalize Bartleby's behavior, the lawyer decides that Bartleby is not working because he has damaged his eyes serving as a copyist. But when Bartleby announces that he has "permanently given up copying," the lawyer is shocked back into a realistic view of the situation:

> In plain fact, he had now become a millstone to me, not only useless as a necklace, but afflictive to bear. Yet I was sorry for him. . . . he seemed alone, absolutely alone in the universe. A bit of wreck in the mid-Atlantic. At length, necessities connected with my business tyrannized over all other considerations. Decently as I could, I told Bartleby that in six days time he must unconditionally leave the office. (P. 125)

Bartleby does not, and his refusal to act normally again forces the lawyer to rationalize his heart-felt instincts. His dissertation on charity (p. 130) and his coming to believe that protecting Bartleby is his destiny (pp. 130-31) are examples of this. Finally, the scandal to his professional reputation (p. 131) and the "dark anticipations" that his devotion to Bartleby will obliterate him (p. 132)

cause a "great change": "I resolved to gather all my faculties together [restore a balance of head and heart] and forever rid me of this incubus" (p. 132). The lawyer moves his office, a wise thing to do, but continues to show compassion for Bartleby. Although he denies responsibility for Bartleby twice (p. 134), he finally offers to take him into his own home (p. 136) and, when that fails, he visits him in jail.

The lawyer's balance saves him. He uses his head to put limits on his compassion for Bartleby. He even gives qualified approval to the initiative of the landlord to have Bartleby jailed:

> The landlord's energetic, summary disposition had led him to adopt a procedure which I do not think I would have decided upon myself; and yet, as a last resort, under such peculiar circumstances, it seemed the only plan. (Pp. 138-39)

At the end of the story the lawyer's reason and compassion temper each other. Bartleby remains unbalanced.[16] Early on he says, "I would prefer not to be a little reasonable" (p. 123). At the end he also rejects reality. The lawyer attempts to get Bartleby to recognize that some solace can be drawn from nature (even the sky and grass found at the prison), but Bartleby will not (pp. 137-38). This extreme, uncompromising position, always a type of madness in Melville writing, leads to his death. So, the lawyer pulls back from an extreme stance on Bartleby and rests on a wisdom that is woe. This woe informs the pathos of the last words of the story, "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!" "Humanity" has several meanings, all of which seem applicable. This

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[16]The suggestion of mental imbalance occurs twice in the story. Ginger Nut says Bartleby is "a little luny" (p. 114). The lawyer tells one of the jailors (the "grubman"), "I think he is a little deranged" p. 138).

lament could refer to all of mankind, or the condition of being human, or the quality of being humane. The last one is interesting because the lawyer's kindness and benevolence do not save Bartleby, and they almost destroy him and his business (his mission). And, if "humanity" --the quality of being humane--can be so ineffectual and dangerous, then the world is indeed a woeful place.

It is still to the lawyer's credit that he tries to help Bartleby. Because this leader's "mission" is not so intimately connected with life and death matters, Melville can let him go further in indulging his heart than any of the ship captains. For being such a prudent man, the lawyer deserves sympathy for risking so much to help Bartleby. As a leader with responsibilities to his clients and his employees, he also deserves praise for finally withdrawing from the attraction of Bartleby to meet those very real claims.

In "Benito Cereno" we have a character relationship very much like that of the two principals in "Bartleby"--a normal, decent man, who occupies a leadership position, confronted by an extraordinary being fatally uncommitted to this world.[17] Although Benito Cereno is not strictly a follower of Captain Delano, Delano seems to represent the only hope of salvation for his other-worldly acquaintance.

The two stories differ in that the lawyer knows almost immediately that he has a problem with Bartleby. Delano knows something is wrong with Cereno but takes quite a while to learn that he is, and how he is, involved in the problem. Babo represents another difference--

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[17]Richard H. Fogle notes that the relationships are "essentially the same" in his Melville's Shorter Tales (Norman, OK.: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 15.

he objectifies the source of terror. "Bartleby" is more universal because the source of despair for the title character is not objectified. Finally, Delano differs from the lawyer in that he is used to taking direct action. When both men act, it is from the heart, but the lawyer, at least in retrospect, is more intellectual.

"Benito Cereno" is about many things, as much perceptive criticism proves. In the framework of this study it is about four leaders who seem to fail. The mention of two other deposed leaders reinforces this theme. Although the reasons for their downfall are not explored, allusions to Atufal's "lost kingdom" and the abdication of Charles V contribute to the theme of failed leadership.

The two Spanish leaders, Aranda and Cereno, are guilty of the same flaw as Delano: they are "undistrustful." They fail to chain the slaves. In his deposition Cereno says, "[N]one wore fetters, because the owner, his friend Aranda, told him that they were all tractable."[18] This mis-reading of the situation shows either a deficiency of intellect or an excess of good nature. In either case, Cereno's great perception into the nature of evil is the result of a flaw in his leadership--permitting an act too humane for the realities of the situation.

Melville emphasizes this deficiency in Aranda by stressing the role of his obviously trusted personal servant, Jose. Jose relates to Babo the state of affairs in the cabin before the revolt, and "this same Negro Jose was the one who, without being commanded to do so by

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[18]Herman Melville, "Benito Cereno," Billy Budd and Other Tales, afterword Willard Thorp (New York: The New American Library, 1961), p. 209. All further references to this work appear in the text.

the Negro Babo, as Lecbe and Martinqui were, stabbed by his master, Don Alexandro, after he had been dragged half-lifeless to the deck" (pp. 216-17). In one sense all the death and destruction can be traced to Alexandro's faulty assessment that his slaves were "tractable." And, of course, he is the one whom Babo designates as the "leader" of Cereno and the other whites. Cereno shares the blame for the uprising because he put the courtesies of friendship ahead of the responsibilities of his command. The acts of both men, while seemingly reasonable at the time, show a deficiency of head, or an excess of heart, which results in disaster. As George Knox says in "Lost Command: Benito Cereno Reconsidered," "In Humanitarian moods we often expose the good to the depredations of evil."[19]

While the two Spaniards are unbalanced toward the heart, Babo, as leader of the revolt, is grossly unbalanced the other way. His absence of heart, of humanity, is shown in his utter disregard for human life and, especially, in the treatment of Alexandro. He may, or may not, be rebelling to right an original wrong (slavery), but that does not seem to be one of his prime motivations. Babo shows no humanity towards the whites and no real compassion for his own people. He seems more concerned with the intellectual evil of vengeance than he does with rescuing the blacks. Babo proves this by chasing after Cereno rather than staying on board where he was needed as leader. Melville emphasizes the imbalance behind Babo's intentions while describing the black's actions in Delano's boat: "[H]e was snakishly writhing up from the boat's bottom at the heart of his master, his

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[19]George Knox, "Lost Command: Benito Cereno Reconsidered," The Personalist, 40 (Summer, 1959) 280.

countenance lividly vindictive, expressing the centered purpose of his soul" (p. 202). Obsession leads to destruction, and by centering his soul on vengeance, Babo loses his power--he fails as a leader of the blacks.

Here Melville uses the term "soul" (which implies a concentration of all of Babo's capabilities), but at the end of the story he stresses Babo's lack of heart. First, in a simple, but important, description of Babo the narrator says: "[T]he black--whose brain, not body, had schemed and led the revolt, with the plot--his slight frame, inadequate to that which it held, had at once yielded . . . " (p. 222). Secondly, after the trial Babo's "inadequate" body is burnt, but his head, "that hive of subtlety," is fixed on a pole. As a perfect symbol of Babo's imbalance, his head exists for "many days" after his heart has been cremated.

The fourth major leader and focal point of the story is, of course, Captain Delano. Melville's first description of the American suggests an imbalance bewteen the heart and the head:

> Captain Delano's surprise might have deepened into some uneasiness had he not been a person of a singularly undistrustful good nature, not liable except on extraordinary and repeated incentives, and hardly then, to indulge in personal alarms any way involving the imputation of malign evil in man. Whether, in view of what humanity is capable, such a trait implies, along with a benevolent heart, more than ordinary quickness and accuracy of intellectual perception, may be left to the wise to determine. (P. 142)

Ordinary intellectual perception might recognize evil sooner than Delano's, but a more balanced leader confronting the same problem would be another story. It might also be a shorter story since the inability to perceive evil is what preserves Delano. Perhaps one key to accepting Delano, in addition to recognizing his "undistrustful

good nature," is found in Moby-Dick. Ishmael is worried about shipping with a captain he has never seen and says: "But when a man suspects any wrong, it sometimes happens that if he be already involved in the matter, he insensibly strives to cover up his suspicions even from himself."[20] Delano's visit to the San Dominick is this theory in action.

When he steps on board the Spanish ship, Delano expects to find the same hierarchical sense of order one would find on his, or any other, ship. These expectations, normal enough for one used to command, seem to blind him to reality as much as his essential good-nature. After understanding the hardships and knowing that "nothing more relaxes good order than misery," the American still judges Captain Cereno by the standards of good leadership: "[He] was not without the idea that had Benito Cereno been a man of greater energy, misrule would hardly have come to the present pass" (p. 148). Likewise, at first the noisy confusion of the San Dominick does not suggest the unthinkable (i.e. rebellion), it provokes thoughts of what should be: "What the San Dominick wanted was, what the emigrant ship has, stern superior officers" (p. 151). Throughout the story Delano's expectations of normal order and his judgments of Cereno's bad leadership hinder him from correctly placing the source of the trouble. When one of the blacks goes unpunished for stabbing a Spanish boy, Delano says, "'Had such a thing happened on board the Bachelor's Delight, instant punishment would have followed'" (p. 157). Cereno starts, but then replies laconically, "'Doubtless, doubtless, señor.'"

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[20]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1967), p. 90.

At this point Delano thinks to himself, "Is it . . . that this hapless man is one of those paper captains I've known, who by policy wink at what by power they cannot put down? I know no sadder sight than a commander who has little of command but the name" (p. 157).

Delano's own leadership evinces itself in a propensity for direct action. Most of his acts are to correct the problems as he perceives them, and most are motivated by promptings of the heart. On seeing the misery on board and "losing no time in mere compliments," he dispatches his boat to bring water (p. 147). After hearing a recital of the San Dominick's woes, Delano, at first, ascribes part of the trouble to "clumsy seamanship and faulty navigation." But then, "drowning criticism in compassion," he promises to supply Cereno with a large supply of water and three of his best seamen (p. 155).

The good-nature and compassion of the fictional Delano originate in Melville's source. At the end of his story, Melville has Delano say,

> [T]he temper of my mind that morning was more than commonly pleasant, while the sight of so much suffering, more apparent than real, added to my good-nature, compassion, and charity, happily interweaving the three. Had it been otherwise, doubtless . . . some of my interferences might have ended, unhappily enough. Besides, those feelings I spoke of enabled me to get the better of momentary distrust, at times when acuteness might have cost me my life, without saving another's. P. 221)

In the source, the original Delano writes, "It was to my great advantage, that, on this occasion, the temperament of my mind was unusually pleasant. The apparent sufferings of those about me had softened my feelings into sympathy; or, doubtless my interference with some of

their transactions would have cost me my life."[21]

This declaration probably stuck in Melville's imagination because the leadership problems of the real Delano were severe enough to preclude this show of pleasant-mindedness in a less robust soul. Delano's situation included a monetarily unsuccessful voyage and a crew composed mainly of convicts. Some of these, at the time of his meeting with the Spanish ship, were planning to desert to the mainland of Chili by stealing one of his two remaining boats. Of the trip from New Holland to Chili, Delano says:

> The convicts were ever unfaithful, and took all the advantage that opportunity gave them. But sometime exercising very strict discipline, and giving them good wholesome floggings; and at other times treating them with the best I had, or could get, according as their deeds deserved, I managed them without much difficulty during the passage.[22]

In light of his potentially explosive situation, Delano's striking observation on his temperament that morning very likely provided Melville with not only the key to Delano's fictional characterization but with the plot as well. A more balanced leader might have spotted the trouble earlier and inadvertently done something to alert the blacks. Ironically, part of Delano's success is a result of his imbalance towards the heart; his "failure" to save Cereno, however, may

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[21]Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyages and Travels, in the northern and southern hemispheres: comprising three voyages round the world, together with a voyage of survey and discovery in the Pacific Ocean and Oriental Islands, 1917; rpt. in Melville's "Benito Cereno": A Text for Guided Research, ed. John P. Runden (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1965), p. 80.

[22]Delano, p. 78. In "Melville's 'Benito Cereno,'" American Literature, XIX (November, 1947), Rosalie Feltenstein correctly summarizes Delano as a "brave, shrewd sea captain" (p. 246). But she is not quite fair to the man when she adds, "who gives his crew plenty of good wholesome whippings" without explaining to whom, under the conditions, and for what purpose he administered the then legal punishment.

ultimately have nothing to do with his own capabilities.

The fictional Delano's good-nature, compassion, and charity combine with his competent actions to rescue Cereno and his ship. In that sense Delano is like the Shakespearian characters who restore temporal order at the end of the drama. Cereno's death, however, especially when it is expressed in terms of Cereno's following his "leader" (p. 223), implies that Delano has not completely succeeded. Cereno's perception of "The Negro" makes him impervious to any solace that the American can offer. Delano, like the lawyer in "Bartleby," points to the healing power of nature (p. 220), but Cereno, like Bartleby, is beyond help.

Delano has been criticized for his ineptness here, but, again, the question is, Who could save Cereno at this point? Delano knows something of the terrors of nature (his brother was killed at sea), but he, like most of us, is not equipped to handle manic depression or death wishes. Delano represents the "moral vision" of the normal world; he acts as most of us would act if we had as generous a heart and were as competent. Cereno raises an interesting question: Why does he die? There is no definite answer, but, as mentioned, the narrator says that in dying Cereno did "follow his leader." This "leader" is clearly not Delano, who, for all his success in helping Cereno, cannot bring him back to this world. In context the "leader" could be either Aranda or Babo. In the story, Cereno followed both his friend and the black, and both preceded him in death. Cereno's experience gives him woe, but instead of resulting in wisdom, it develops into madness and death.

Although Delano's contact with woe does not seem to make him

as wise as some of Melville's other survivors, Melville did not write "Benito Cereno" to amuse the reader with Delano's intellectual deficiencies. The lesson would seem to be that any of us could just as easily misread our own situation, and that, even if we did perceive "truth," we might be powerless to act. Delano seems to understand the awful truth of this lesson; he probably even understands that knowing that truth will not necessarily prevent the same dilemma from happening again. Delano, like the lawyer, is "Everyman"--at least an "Everyman" who realizes that the world goes on and, after all, prefers to go on with it.

Seeing the lawyer and Delano as leaders of normal society allows a moderate interpretation of Melville's intentions in both stories. Each leader uses the goodness of his heart and the power of his position to help someone in trouble. In both cases the specific actions taken flirt with disaster, but in both cases the leaders temper their compassion with the demands of reality. They act to save themselves and fulfill their temporal responsibilities. The mysterious forces that drive the two title characters cannot be controlled by human endeavor, and the two leaders are smart enough to let them run their course. To fight them would have made Ahabs or Pierres out of the lawyer and Delano. Melville was no longer interested in hopeless causes or perfectibility. He was interested in surviving in an imperfect world--another good indication of his classically conservative attitude.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE BALANCED MAN IN ACTION

The last leader that Melville fully and carefully depicts in action is Captain Vere. While the poetry is full of commanders, it is more important for revealing Melville's attitudes toward leadership and conservatism than for its usually brief portraits of individual leaders. As such, the poetry, in general, will be discussed as one of the influences on the creation of Vere. Another influence to be explored is Melville's reading of an 1883 edition of Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy. The final portion of this chapter will study the juxtaposition of Lord Nelson and Captain Vere and its suggested relationship between the ideal and the real. Vere is not an ideal, but he is the most balanced "real" leader Melville ever depicted in action. Melville creates sympathy for Vere by making him acutely aware of both the nature of the dilemma and the need to act.

### I

As in "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno," the focus of Billy Budd is on a leader--the central character--and his relationship to the extraordinary title character. Vere is like the lawyer and Captain Delano in that he is a conservative man who acts to restore and preserve order in the real world. Like the others, his heart goes out to the extraordinary being he encounters, but considerations of this world ultimately determine his actions.

The relationship between Vere and Budd, however, is

significantly different because Vere, unlike the other two leaders, is an "exceptional" (although not extraordinary) character. This limited elevation of Vere is in keeping with Melville's preoccupation, from the mid-1850's on, with normal men and their real problems. Vere combines the lawyer's intellectual perception and Delano's readiness to act. In other words, he is a more balanced character than either one of them. He also has some understanding of the vision of evil that incapacitates Bartleby and Benito Cereno, but the effect on him is to confirm his belief that only "lasting institutions" can promote "the true welfare of mankind."[1] The narrator highlights the special relationship between Vere and Budd when he tries to imagine the Captain informing Billy of the verdict: his difficulty is in conjecturing what might happen when "two of Great Nature's nobler order embrace" (p. 115).

Seeing Vere as a balanced leader is essential to understanding the greatness of Billy Budd. Vere shows the heart qualities in "always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men" and being "intrepid to the verge of temerity" (p. 60). He displays qualities of the head in that his intrepidity is never injudicious; he is "thoroughly versed in the science of his profession" (p. 60); he has a "marked learning toward everything intellectual" (p. 62); and his reading habits are those "to which every serious mind of superior order occupying any active position of authority in the world naturally inclines" (p. 62). His peers stress his balance when they say, "Vere is a noble fellow . . . [Nelson] is at bottom

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[1]Herman Melville, Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative), ed. Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 63. All further references to the work appear in the text.

scarce a better seaman or fighter" (p. 63). And the narrator provides a useful summary of Vere's balanced capabilities in discussing one reason why the Bellipotent was chosen for isolated duty:

> [T]he character of her commander, it was thought, specially adapted him for any duty where under unforeseen difficulties a prompt initiative might have to be taken in some matter demanding knowledge and ability in addition to those qualities implied in good seamanship. (P. 90)

Vere is the most balanced leader that Melville presents in action. He has more heart than the romantic hero, Ahab, and he has a more penetrating intellect than the legendary hero, John Paul Jones. He is also as capable a commander as either of them.

It is fitting that the central character of the tragedy is an exceptional leader, because Billy Budd is a work of balance. To interpret it as presenting only one side of the conflict between authority and freedom is to degrade tragedy into political polemic. The fulcrum, or focal point, of the story is Captain Vere--a man with enough intellect to understand the laws of both man and the spirit, with enough wisdom to know that the laws of spirit are not always workable in the world of man, and with enough compassion to agonize over his decision to support man's laws.

To make the story as dramatic as possible, Melville had to make Vere a sympathetic character. Vere had to be admirable, but not readily subject to allegorical interpretation as Budd and Claggart are. In short, he had to be less "god-like" and more human than the other two principals. Of the three main characters, Vere is the one with whom the reader can most readily identify, and the obvious implication is that Melville wanted the reader to experience Vere's dilemma. What does one do when the laws of man and the laws of the spirit collide?

How does one go about rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's? The greatness of Billy Budd is not in answers to, but in the posing of, the questions.[2] In their 1962 edition of Billy Budd, Hayford and Sealts comment on the centrality of the political issues in the novel. They discuss the reference to the Rights-of-Man being Paine's rejoinder to "Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution": "The opposing positions of the two men concerning the doctrine of abstract natural rights lie behind the dialectic of Billy Budd."[3] Society versus the individual, authority versus freedom--these are the conflicts, and they center on Vere.

As this study has tried to show, Melville always understood the necessity of authority and laws. The brief summary of Billy Budd criticism in my introduction, however, notes that some critics do not accept this conservative aspect of Melville's social thought. Schiffman, for example, states: "The disillusioned of the world toasted Melville as a long unclaimed member of their heartbroken family. Here indeed was a prize recruit . . . [a Melville saying] 'God bless Captain Vere,' thereby accepting authority. A prize catch indeed, if it were really so!" Of Watson's "Testament of Acceptance" theory, Schiffman says: "[His] bias towards a philosophy of acceptance is

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[2] In Melville: The Ironic Diagram (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), John Seelye says, "Melville's finished work of this [later] period is more concerned with the presentation of mysteries than with the frustration of those who try to solve them" (p. 156). I will try to show that in this "unfinished" work, Melville is equally concerned with Vere's frustrations.

[3] Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr., ed., Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative), by Herman Melville (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 138. Hereafter cited as H & S.

clear; he searches in Melville for confirmation of his own dogma."[4] Billy Budd is so finely balanced that it does not provide confirmation for anybody's dogma. It does provoke debate because it evenly juxtaposes the claims of society and the claims of an individual--a very real problem in the real world.

Perhaps the 1950's critics can be excused for overstatement; they were rebelling against the established critical opinion of Billy Budd. The unbalanced criticism still continues, however, even after Hayford's and Sealts's thorough research suggested that the story epitomizes a "problematical world" rather than a definitive position.[5] One critic of the 1970's who asserts that Melville is taking a definite stand is Ray B. Browne, who calls Billy Budd a "gospel of democracy." Browne's comments on Vere contrast with my thesis that Vere must be seen as a balanced leader and a sympathetic character. In choosing Browne for the dubious honor of being a foil, I do not mean to deny his basic thesis that Melville was a humanist. I would claim, however, that Melville and Vere are, as Walter E. Bezanson said of Rolfe, Vine, and the narrator of Clarel, "skeptical humanists."[6] Browne's thesis is particularly denigrating to Captain Vere:

> The novel instead of demonstrating the irresistible triumph of political evil, of conservatism, insists on the opposite, that the Veres (and Claggarts) prevail only in the short run, never in the long; that though the Budds seem to lose and are even

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[4]Joseph Schiffman, "Melville's Final State, Irony: A Re-Examination of Billy Budd Criticism," American Literature, 22 (May, 1950), 129-30.

[5]H & S, p. 39.

[6]Walter E. Bezanson, ed. Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land, by Herman Melville (New York: Hendricks House, 1960), p. lxxi.

> destroyed personally, they ultimately prevail, not in themselves but in the political philosophy and in the people they represent.[7]

Stuart B. James, in addressing the same basic conflict between the "One" and the "Many" that informs Billy Budd, could be speaking of Browne when he says, "Few American authors have been willing to admit the essential equality of the claims of these polarities, the society and the individual, the them and the me. Most Americans tend to demonize the one or the other."[8] Browne, in his insistence that there is only one good political movement (something opposed to conservatism), "demonizes" Vere. He inhumanely destroys Vere's character to show how wonderful humanism is:

> After Claggart is killed, Vere's mind and nerve crack. He tries to be the strict "military disciplinarian" but cannot. He becomes more and more excited. His actions thereafter are always erratic. Melville spends several paragraphs analyzing the captain to determine if he is truly mad. The surgeon surely thinks he is, while Melville, speaking as author, implies that he is. In this breakup of Vere, Melville invalidates the captain's credentials as political philosopher. Vere has become, in fact, capable of great evil and perhaps of much destructiveness.
>
> In his madness Vere can think only of self-protection.[9]

This statement is not only wrong (Vere remains a disciplinarian and he thinks of many other things besides "self-protection"), but it indirectly questions the integrity of the story. It threatens to turn a complex tragedy into a simple allegory.

In speaking of the reader's expectations of great literature, Wayne C. Booth says one source of our "practical" interest is our

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[7] Ray B. Browne, Melville's Drive to Humanism (Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue Univ. Studies, 1971), p. 380.

[8] Stuart B. James, "The Politics of Personal Salvation: The American Literary Record," Denver Quarterly, 4 (Summer, 1969), 25.

[9] Browne, p. 388.

caring about the characters. Then he adds, "The best of these [practical interests] has always been the spectacle of a good man facing moral choices that are important."[10] Browne's interpretation of Vere not only denies his goodness, his comments on the "official" report of Claggart's death even deny his importance: "Vere is not mentioned. . . . In the chronicle of human events, Melville is saying, such a man does not deserve even being named."[11]

It is hard not to agree with those who believe that Melville is concerned with the people. That concern, however, is not only with their being freed from oppression but for the right kind of authority and leaders to govern them. If we read this novel as it relates to the political issues in the real world, then we should not forget that some type of government is necessary. The sailors are described as "juvenile," and the landsmen are involved in "an oblique, tedious, barren game" (p. 87); they are not Billy Budds. Unless complete anarchy is proposed, how is society to deal with its imperfections? Some critics damn Vere, but Billy Budd, who is without the ability "to deal in double meanings and insinuations," blesses him. The epitome of the common man, as Browne and others make him out to be, comprehends something of Vere's dilemma. Even Jack Chase, to whom Billy Budd is dedicated, "was a stickler for the Rights of Man and the liberties of the world" when ashore, but afloat he bowed to naval

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[10]Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 131.

[11]Browne, p. 392.

discipline.[12] Thus, the best of the "democrats" understand the need for laws, authority, and discipline at certain times.

The Hayford and Sealts edition of Billy Budd discusses the development of the story and its relation to the political controversy:

> It seems fair to say that were it not for the effect of Melville's late pencil revisions . . . the critical controversy of the last dozen years over the story's tone in relation to Vere and his actions would scarcely have arisen . . . The cumulative effect--whatever the intention--of his subsequent deletions and insertions, however, was to throw into doubt not only the rightness of Vere's decision and the soundness of his mind but also the narrator's own position concerning him. As the revised sequence now stands, it is no longer as narrator but in terms of the surgeon's reflections that Melville introduces the reaction to Vere and his plan to place Billy on trial. He leaves the narrator pointedly non-committal, telling the reader in so many words that he must decide for himself concerning the captain's state of mind. Yet in the unmodified paragraphs that Melville allowed to stand immediately after the surgeon's reflections, the narrator presents Vere's position in a sympathetic tone.[13]

They then warn against any simplistic interpretation of Melville's attitude toward Vere, especially one based on the idea that the surgeon becomes Melville's spokesman. They point out the "near-caricature" of the doctor as a typical Melvillean "man of science" in the abortive discussion of "will-power" and "euthanasia" in Chapter 26. He, and the other officers (not to mention the crew) exemplify the theme that such ordinary minds cannot understand the "exceptional natures" of the three principals of the story: "Thus the surgeon's attitude toward Vere's behavior parallels his obtuse attitude toward the 'phenomenal' lack of motion in Billy's suspended body."[14]

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[12]Herman Melville, White-Jacket: or The World in a Man-of-War, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 17.

[13]H & S, p. 34.

[14]H & S, p. 35.

Hayford and Sealts make another important observation about the revisions:

> All along, Melville's dramatization had the effect, among others, of dissociating the narrator from commitments he had earlier made or positions that Melville might wish to insinuate without endorsing. . . . In raising, through the surgeon's reactions and his "private and professional" surmises, some question about Vere's course and even his sanity, Melville was deliberately dissociating the narrator from commitment and throwing "cross-lights" upon Vere. . . . To Melville's mind, after all, the question was not simply the rightness or wrongness, sanity or insanity, of the captain's action, but also the very existence of a problematical world in which such a story as he had been so long developing and brooding upon was (in his guarded phrase) "not unwarranted." His story was an epitome, in art, of such a world.[15]

If there is a need for authority in this "problematical world," what kind should it be? Who should administer it? Melville's obvious concern with the portrait of Captain Vere should indicate that he was exploring those questions. It also seems reasonable to assume that, in the interest of tense drama, he would depict the most balanced leader he could--a good man making important decisions. In addition to being plausible, this leader must be both intelligent and humane enough to see the basic issues in most of their abstractions and ramifications.

Some readers might consider it a flaw in Vere that he chooses to uphold society's law at the expense of the individual; Melville might agree with them. But he put Vere in a position of choosing between two goods, not between good and evil. Browne insists that even on the political level, the struggle is still between good and evil:

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[15] H & S, pp. 38-39.

> The struggle is not between Claggart and Budd, but between Captain Vere as spokesman and apologist for authority (with Claggart serving only as prime mover) and Billy, who is on this level, Melville takes great pains to point out, representative of the common, ordinary sailor, the voice of the people in their insistence on their right.[16]

I suggest that on most levels of interpretation Vere is representative of normal humanity and that Budd is an almost allegorical representation of an ideal. Melville wanted the reader to respond to both the ideal and the real. The only way he could do that was to try to make both characters deserving of sympathy.

In addition to Vere's thoughtful and capable seamanship, many details in the story are designed to create sympathy for his position, especially his isolation from the Fleet. The two encounters with the enemy before returning to the Fleet should remind us that the setting is combat--one where life and death hang in the balance on almost every decision. John B. Noone points out another factor underlying the story that gives some focus to Vere's dilemma:

> The irony, so often noted, of Budd's impressment is not exhausted in the fact that he is taken from the Rights of Man. On a deeper level lurks the paradox that the Rights as a merchant ship is free to sail the seas only on conditions that the sealanes are kept open by such a vessel as the Indomitable. And the Indomitable can protect the Rights only insofar as it is manned by men impressed from such as the Rights. The unhappy fact, given the times, is that if the Hobbesian Indomitable stands in conflict with the symbolic idealism of the Rights of Man, it is nonetheless the ultimate condition of the existence of the Rights of Man.[17]

Any combat leader naturally assumes that his unit is vital to his society's defense. If Vere were lenient to Budd and if it did lead to

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[16]Browne, p. 379.

[17]John B. Noone, Jr., "Billy Budd: Two Concepts of Nature," American Literature, XXIX (1957), 254.

a mutiny, to the loss of the Ballipotent/Indomitable, to a weakening of the Fleet (which was the only thing standing between England and the revolution in Europe), then Vere would be derelict in his duty to the society he had sworn to defend. To pretend that this particular story is about tyranny versus democracy is to pretend that the setting is 1776, not 1797. During the decade of the 1790's, the French Revolution had become a bloodbath--closer to anarchy than democracy. Vere's choice when he thought about it on a practical political level was between a relatively stable English government and the atrocities of Robespierre and The Directory.[18] To discuss that basic situation in terms of Paine and Burke or of Rousseau and Hobbes is, perhaps, to forget Vere's real and immediate dilemma.

Melville was always interested in the rights of men, but what justifies saying that his interests in Billy Budd also included a sympathetic exploration of authority and leadership? Once again, the similarities between Melville's two great short stories and Billy Budd reveal the precedent for making a leader the central character. Hayford's and Sealts's discussion of the three stages of composition leading to Vere as a focal point also supports the idea that Melville

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[18]Vere steadfastly opposes the French Revolution for reasons stated in the text of the story. Melville displays a mixed attitude towards it. In what is commonly known as the "Preface" to Billy Budd (Hayford and Sealts call it Leaves 229d,e, and f), the narrator says the Revolution bloodily righted some old wrongs then it "became a wrongdoer. . . . During those years not the wisest could have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what to some thinkers apparently it has since turned out to be--a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans" (my italics). In a note to "The Conflict of Convictions" in Battle-Pieces, Melville speaks of the "eclipse which came over the promise of the first French Revolution."

was sympathetically interested in Vere's dilemma.[19] Two other factors which need to be explored are leadership in Melville's poetry and the influence of Arnold's Culture and Anarchy.

II

As many students of Melville have discussed, Billy Budd grows, literally and figuratively, out of Melville's poetry. Of particular interest to my thesis is Milton R. Stern's recent (1975) edition of Billy Budd, which contains a perceptive overview of the conservative classicism that shapes both the poems and the novel. As Stern and others have noted, "Dupont's Round Fight" and "The House-Top" are prime examples of Melville's stress on the need for law and order. The latter poem is particularly relevant to the novel.

The need for control of human endeavors, which is one practical result of the classical viewpoint, is intimately involved with the role of the leader. That Melville uses the term, "The Leader," in such poems as "Lyon" and "The Scout toward Aldie" indicates he is more interested in the role of leadership than he is in the individual

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[19] In his edition of Billy Budd (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1975), Milton R. Stern says, "Phase III was begun sometime after November 1888, and is almost totally given over to the introduction and development of Captain Vere. . . . [M]using on the question of guilt, innocence, and responsibility, Melville found the focus that consumed him most" (p. 145). In June 1888 Lt. H. D. Smith's article, "Mutiny on the Somers," appeared in American Magazine. Robert Penn Warren notes, "Smith's article comes early enough to have been a possible though not a necessary relation to the development of Vere's character, in sympathetically emphasizing the responsibility of command." Selected Poems of Herman Melville (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 82.

holding that position.[20] Of course, in the poems which name the most famous leaders, such as Lee, Grant, McClellan, and Jackson, the man and his position cannot really be separated.

In the poems, especially Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War, the quantity of references to commanders is a good indication of Melville's strong interest in leadership. The quality of these brief glimpses is even more suggestive. In "Donelson," which was written to mark the North's first significant victory, General Grant is both the instigator of victory and symbol for all the Union soldiers. After losing ground in a Confederate counter-attack,

> Our grim-faced boys in blackened plight
> Gaze toward the ground they held before,
> And then on Grant. He marks their mood,
> And hails it, and will turn the same to good.[21]

The poet never explains how Grant marshals the spirit and determination of his troops, but forecasts that he will. When victory finally comes, the praise is focused on Grant as symbol for all the North's soldiers:

> The spell of old defeat is broke,
> The habit of victory begun;
> Grant strikes the war's first sounding stroke
> At Donelson. (P. 32)

Melville is more explicit about the nature, and the effects, of good leadership in "The Battle for the Bay"--a recounting of Admiral Farragut's capture of Mobile, Alabama:

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[20] In the latter poem there is a veteran officer who has achieved the balance of head and heart, but he is not the leader. The "grizzled Major" tries to counsel the Colonel to whom "command is a boyish thing." Melville effectively uses the Major's caution to create a sense of foreboding. The Major is briefly seen in command as he leads the men away from Aldie.

[21] Howard P. Vincent, ed., Collected Poems of Herman Melville (Chicago: Packard and Co. Hendricks House, 1947), p. 29. Further references to the poems will appear by page number in the text.

> The fire redoubles. While the fleet
> Hangs dubious--ere the horror ran--
> The Admiral rushes to his rightful place--
> Well met! apt hour and man!--
> Closes with peril, takes the lead,
> His action is a stirring call;
> He strikes his great heart through them all,
> And is the genius of their daring deed. (P. 74)

Not all of the leaders Melville depicts, however, are successful (witness the young colonel in "The Scout toward Aldie"), and many have mixed success. McClellan is "unprosperously heroical" at the beginning of "The Victor of Antietam":

> Authority called you; then, in mist
> And loom of jeopardy--dismissed.
> But staring peril soon appalled;
> You, the Discarded, she recalled--
> Recalled you, nor endured delay;
> And forth you rode upon a blasted way . . . (P. 46)

In this battle, at least, McClellan redeems his fortunes. "The Admiral of the White" goes from victory to a sudden death, and the "OLD COUNSEL of the Young Master of a wrecked California Clipper" is this:

> Come out of the Golden Gate,
> Go round the Horn with streamers,
> Carry royals early and late;
> But, brother, be not over-elate--
> <u>All hands save ship</u>! has startled dreamers. (P. 199)

While none of the poems allow us to know these leaders to the extent fictional treatment would, it is clear that Melville is sympathetic to them and their experiences. This sympathy is the same that he extends to the lawyer, Delano, and Vere; in this sense the poems provide a bridge between the short stories and the last novel.[22]

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[22] In <u>Herman Melville's "Clarel": A Spiritual Autobiography</u> (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1973), Vincent Kenny makes a similar connection: "The overall recommendation in <u>Clarel</u> is for man to make some declaration of purpose as a way out of chaos, even when his problems remain unsolved. This principle of self-imposed discipline to bring about order supports the simplistic argument that Captain

The nature of this "bridge" is stated most succinctly in Robert Penn Warren's study of the poems:

> The underlying tragic insight of Battle-Pieces is . . . the necessity for action in the face of the difficulty of knowing truth. In this situation man becomes fully man only if he submits himself to the complications of the inwardness of life in order to be returned, chastened and enlightened, to the objective world of action.[23]

Bartleby and Benito Cereno portray ultimate inaction, and even Billy Budd is doomed because he does not know how to react to the realities of this world. By comparison, Melville's Civil War leaders and Captain Vere are the knowledgeable men of action. Warren also says:

> But to live in any full sense demands the effort to comprehend . . . this density and equivocalness of experience, and yet not forfeit the ability to act. The man who "sees through it," but who, at the same time, can act, who has a sense of the tragedy of the human plight--that is the hero for Melville.[24]

There is one other major character from the poetry who must be mentioned in this discussion of Melville's human "heroes." Rolfe, in Clarel, shows all of the attributes of a great leader, but unfortunately he does not have a formal position in which to use them. The main focus of this major poem is on Clarel's coming to understand the "density and equivocalness of experience"; it is not about action. Warren discusses "the balanced, mature wisdom of Rolfe, who . . .

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Vere uses in Billy Budd to overcome the drumhead court and the inclinations of his own heart. It . . . enables leaders and other realists to deal with the people in an earthly, horological manner. It provides a practical solution for the individual in society and grants him a limited but ordered freedom. If such a discipline cannot provide the joy that Pan and Christ promised, it can at least lead one out of madness" (p. 145).

[23]Warren, p. 32.

[24]Warren, p. 22.

embodies the human depth and control which Clarel will come, only in the end, to appreciate."[25] Rolfe serves as a guide, not as a leader, to Clarel, and in the poem his position and influence are further diluted (as they must be if the search is to be an honest one) because he is only one of many potential guides.

In his introduction to Clarel, Walter E. Bezanson discusses Rolfe as an autobiographical projection of Melville--an observation which may help us to see more clearly Melville's interest in the balanced man. At this time in his life Melville clearly grasps the "equivocalness of experience," and yet he himself continues to act--to function in the real world. Even more tangibly relevant, Bezanson sees Rolfe, "the central figure among Clarel's companions," as a leader:

> Rolfe is an experienced world-traveler, mariner, and intellectual who quickly assumes leadership among the pilgrims. The best-rounded temperament of the group, he represents an ideal UNION OF HEAD AND HEART. His ranging mind, general literacy, and speculative gifts are balanced by a personal warmth that ranges from jocularity to compassion.[26]

Rolfe and the leaders in the poems show us that Melville was sympathetically interested in balanced men--men who could think and act. Since Billy Budd originates in the poetry, it seems reasonable to claim that this major theme was present when Melville developed the character of Captain Vere--also a thinking man of action.

Another major theme of the poetry which supports the contention

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[25]Warren, p. 39. The following descriptions of Rolfe suggest his balance between extremes: The narrator says, "Sterling--yes,/ Despite illogical wild range/Of brain and heart's impulsive counter-change" (II, xxi, 135-37); Clarel asks, "Earnest he seems: can union be/'Twixt earnestness and levity?" (III, xvi, 263-64).

[26]Bezanson, p. 545.

that Vere is a sympathetic character is Melville's increasingly clear position on the necessity for law and order. Since this theme has been traced in other essays,[27] I intend to concentrate only on the close relationship between Billy Budd and the poem most often cited as his clearest statement of the need for authority, "The House-Top":

> No sleep. The sultriness pervades the air
> And binds the brain--a dense oppression, such
> As tawny tigers feel in matted shades,
> Vexing their blood and making apt for ravage.
> Beneath the stars the roofy desert spreads
> Vacant as Libya. All is hushed near by.
> Yet fitfully from far breaks a mixed surf
> Of muffled sound, the Atheist roar of riot.
> Yonder, where parching Sirius set in drought,
> Balefully glares red Arson--there--and there.
> The Town is taken by its rats--ship-rats
> And rats of the wharves. All civil charms
> And priestly spells which late held hearts in awe--
> Fear-bound, subjected to a better sway
> Than sway of self; these like a dream dissolve,
> And man rebounds whole aeons back in nature.
> Hail to the low dull rumble, dull and dead,
> And ponderous drag that shakes the wall.
> Wise Draco comes, deep in the midnight roll
> Of black artillery; he comes, though late;
> In code corroborating Calvin's creed
> And cynic tyrannies of honest kings;
> He comes, nor parleys; and the Town, redeemed,
> Gives thanks devout; nor, being thankful, heeds
> The grimy slur on the Republic's faith implied,
> Which holds that Man is naturally good,
> And--more--is Nature's Roman, never to be scourged.
> (P. 57)

There are several important links between this poem and Billy Budd. The "Atheist roar of riot" establishes a bad connotation for the word, "Atheist." This fact should suggest there are dangers in

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[27] See Richard H. Fogle, "The Themes of Melville's Later Poetry," Tulane Studies in English, 10 (1960), 101-16; Jane Donahue, "Melville's Classicism: Law and Order in His Poetry," Papers on Language and Literature, V (1969), 63-72; and, of course, Stern's introduction to his edition of Billy Budd.

interpreting the Athee's killing of Vere as a good thing.[28] The "rat" and "star" images in the poem are important in the novel too. But most significant is the fact that both works deal with the philosophical problems inherent in maintaining social order. The poet calls attention to the obvious dichotomy between the "Republic's faith" that all men are "naturally good"—"never to be scourged"--and the fact that some men in that society need to be controlled by force to preserve the "Town." In the poem the "Town" is thankful, but the narrator takes a more philosophical view. English society, the "Town" of Billy Budd, might have applauded Captain Vere's decision too, if it was convinced that Vere did what he had to do for society's preservation. In both works we see, or are supposed to see, the political and philosophical issues more clearly from our detached viewpoint. Melville poses the demands of society against the demands of the individual as equally as he can.

The "rat" imagery of "The House-Top" is present in the story, and should be used to bring some realism into the political interpretations of Billy Budd. It is used by Captain Graveling to describe the normal life aboard the Rights-of-Man before Budd joined his crew. So much has been made of this ship's name representing some kind of political ideal that many people have forgotten to look at the actual

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[28] John Bernstein does this in Pacifism and Rebellion in the Writings of Herman Melville (London: Mouton & Co., 1964): "This ship, obviously symbolic of the French Revolution, is the only force in the book to openly combat tyranny. Melville's ultimate position is that rebellion . . . is the only power which may eventually liberate mankind . . ." (p. 220). As mentioned earlier, Melville had mixed reactions to the Revolution. Melville's original name for the ship that kills Vere was Directory (H & S, p. 199)--a facet of the Revolution he surely would not approve.

conditions on board. Graveling says: "Before I shipped that young fellow [Billy], my forecastle was a rat-pit of quarrels. It was black times, I tell you, aboard the Rights here." Later he says, "If that young fellow goes--I know how it will be aboard the Rights. Not again very soon shall I, coming up from dinner, lean over the capstan smoking a quiet pipe--no, not very soon again, I think" (pp. 46-47). These passages suggest something disquieting about the normal state of an undisciplined microcosm of society. Though Captain Graveling is a "'respectable man,'" a "worthy mortal," and though he "took to heart those serious responsibilities not so heavily borne by some ship masters," his own testimony reveals that he did not (or could not) exercise the leadership necessary to eliminate or reduce the quarreling of the "rat-pit." Graveling is "humanely intelligent" (p. 45) and portrayed sympathetically, but here Melville suggests that loving "simple peace and quiet" and attaining it are not the same thing. Like Nelson, Graveling is a foil to Captain Vere.

The "star" imagery of "The House-Top" is also found in Billy Budd. There may be some correlation between the poem and the novel in that both are set in the hottest time of the year--the "dog days" of "parching Sirius." In the novel, though, the imagery provides some useful distinctions between the main characters. One of the first images in the novel is the Handsome Sailor as "Aldebaran among the lesser lights of his constellation" (p. 43). Hayford and Sealts note: "Aldebaran is a star of the first magnitude, 'eye' of the constellation Taurus, the bull; further allusions in succeeding paragraphs to the 'grand sculptured Bull' and 'the horns of Taurus'

belong to the same sequences of images.[29] The transition from the generalized Handsome Sailor to Billy Budd as a Handsome Sailor contains other words common in astronomy or astrology: "[C]omeliness and power, always attractive in masculine conjunction," and "Such a synosure, at least in aspect . . . though with important variations made apparent as the story proceeds, was Billy Budd" (p. 44). More mundanely, Budd is assigned to the "starboard" watch of the foretop (p. 49).

Another "star" of the "first magnitude" in the story seems to be Admiral Nelson. Melville mentions "the star inserted in the Victory's quarter-deck designating the spot where the Great Sailor fell" (p. 57). Nelson is obviously used as a standard of reference for leadership. As John B. Noone suggests, he is a synthesis of naval discipline and humane action.[30] Although we hear about Nelson, we never see him in action. This important fact will be discussed in a comparison of the two leaders at the end of this chapter. Nelson's great battles are mentioned at Vere's death: "Unhappily he was cut off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar. The spirit that 'spite its philosophic austerity may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions, ambition, never attained the fullness of fame" (p. 129). In other words, Vere never became a "star."

But his nickname, "Starry," is, of course, connected with the imagery. It implies that he was close to achieving the type of permanence in the heavens ascribed to Budd and Nelson. I would suggest

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[29] H & S, p. 135.

[30] Noone, p. 261.

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HERMAN MELVILLE AND THE ART OF LEADERSHIP.(U)
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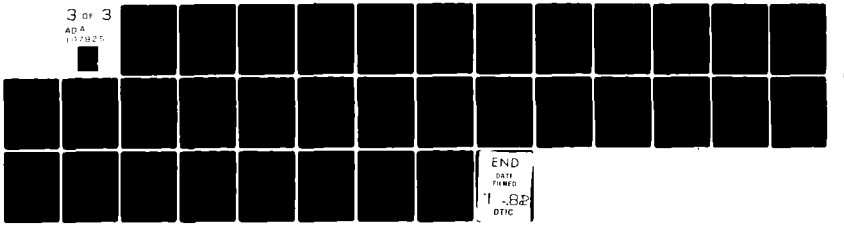

that Vere stands for all leaders and the order they represent--a sort of Everyman put into a position of responsibility. Richard H. Fogle has made this interpretation of Vere's role: "He is certainly used as a symbol for order; . . . he represents the steadfast, well-regulated system of the heavens, the ideal of conservatism."[31] In this imagery he is not quite a star of the first magnitude.

Against the well-regulated order that Vere represents, in wanders Claggart: "About as much was really known to the Bellipotent's tars of the master-at-arms' career before entering the service as an astronomer knows about a comet's travels prior to its first observable appearance in the sky" (p. 67). The comet was traditionally a portent of evil and disruption, and movement in the heavens was one of Melville's favorite and consistent symbols for rebellion.[32] The other moving heavenly body mentioned in Billy Budd is "the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt," i.e. the French Revolution (p. 54). In summary, both the balanced presentation of society's conflict with individual freedom and the imagery of Billy Budd are significantly similar to one of Melville's important poems. Both works explore the need for law and order to preserve society--even if we (the Republic) do not like to admit it. If one intellectually perceives the need for laws and authority (as Melville seems to have all of his life) and if one then perceives a serious threat to the society ruled by law (as Vere certainly does), what does one do? Vere acts.

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[31]Richard H. Fogle, "Billy Budd: The Order of the Fall," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 15 (December, 1960), 192.

[32]In Mardi, the travelers approach Franko (France) and spot an eruption (the 1848 revolution) signaled by a "vivid meteor" (CEAA, p. 498). In "The Portent" Melville mentions "the meteor of war."

III

One of the attributes that makes Vere a sympathetic character is that he acts, not from a desire for personal glorification or advancement, but disinterestedly.[33] Another reason to think that Melville was sympathetic to Vere is the similarity of their reading habits. As Jay Leyda says, Melville "drew at least one of Captain Vere's traits from his own mind," and that trait was reading as a replacement for conversation.[34] The narrator says of Vere's reading:

> His bias was towards those books to which every serious mind of superior order occupying any active post of authority in the world naturally inclines: . . . history, biography, and unconventional writers like Montaigne, who, free from cant and convention, honestly and in the spirit of common sense philosophize upon realities. In this line of reading he found confirmation of his more reserved thoughts--confirmation which he had vainly sought in social intercourse. . . . His settled convictions were as a dike against those invading waters of novel opinion social, political, and otherwise, which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them not alone because they seemed to him insusceptible of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind. (Pp. 62-63)

As Hayford and Sealts note, the word, "disinterestedly," is "perhaps a reflection of Melville's close reading of Matthew Arnold, advocate of 'disinterestedness.'"[35] This reading may have been another

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[33]Milton R. Stern says in The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1957): "In Vere, Melville has the unopportunistic character through whom he can morally pronounce the necessity for pragmatic judgment" (p. 223).

[34]Jay Leyda, The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville (1951; rpt. [with supplementary chapter] New York: Gordian Press, 1969), p. xx.

[35]H & S, p. 153.

significant influence on the creation of Vere's character.

Melville read and marked an 1883 edition of Arnold's Culture and Anarchy. Although when and how he received it is not recorded in The Melville Log, one can safely say (at least) that Melville read it not too many years before he began Billy Budd in 1888.[36] Arnold published Culture and Anarchy in 1869, eighty years after the French Revolution, but the British riots of the 1860's showed a similar spirit of popular revolt. Arnold was looking for a source of authority to suppress the civil disorders:

> For us—who believe in right reason, in the duty and possibility of extricating and elevating our best self, in the progress of humanity towards perfection,—for us the framework of society, that theatre on which this august drama has to unroll itself, is sacred; and whoever administers it, and however we may seek to remove them from their tenure of administration, yet, while they administer, we steadily and with undivided heart support them in repressing anarchy and disorder; because without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection.
>
> Thus, in our eye, the very framework and exterior order of the state, whoever may administer the State, is sacred.[37]

This basically conservative position (although made with the "liberal" goal of "perfection" in mind) is very similar to Vere's philosophical position. Arnold felt the State would have its most legitimate authority when it was composed of individuals who had achieved their "best selves" through the process of culture. Culture was obtained

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[36] Melville's markings are slight. There are three marks in the Preface (pp. ix, xv, and xxii) and one in the text (p. 131, by the last sentence of the second paragraph in Chapter V). The last page contains the notation, "p. 122 Renascence," probably a reference to the unusual spelling.

[37] Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism, ed. Ian Gregor (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1971). This edition of Culture and Anarchy is thoroughly annotated; consequently, it is very useful to the twentieth-century reader.

by "reading, observing, and thinking."[38] On the problems of achieving the best government, Arnold said: "Now culture, with its disinterested pursuit of perfection, culture, simply trying to see things as they are in order to seize on the best and to make it prevail, is surely well fitted to help us to judge rightly."[39] Vere's habits are reading, observing, and thinking. His ability to "see things as they are," whether he always judges rightly or not, has inculcated in him a thoughtful reservedness, or disinterestedness, which bears a marked resemblance to Arnold's man of culture.

There seems to be another relationship between Billy Budd and Culture and Anarchy in addition to the "cultured" man. In his work Arnold labels the three classes of society: Barbarians (aristocrats), Philistines (middle class), and Populace (working class). Vere and Budd (and perhaps Claggart) have aristocratic ties. In the second chapter of the novel, the narrator says of Budd: "Noble [aristocratic] descent was evident in him as in a Blood horse." A few lines later: "Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian" (p. 52). This image is repeated while Billy is awaiting execution (p. 120). Arnold described the Barbarians this way:

> The care of the Barbarians for the body, and for all manly exercises; the vigour, good looks, and fine complexion which they acquired . . . all this may be observed still in our aristocratic class. The chivalry of the barbarian, with its characteristics of high spirit, choice manners, and distinguished bearing,--what is this but the attractive commencement of the politeness of our aristocratic class?[40]

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[38] Arnold, p. 72.

[39] Arnold, p. 67.

[40] Arnold, p. 85.

While the Barbarians had the "sweetness" (beauty, grace, etc.) Arnold thought desirable, they were short on "light" (intelligence). Budd is called a "sweet and pleasant fellow" by both Red Whiskers and Claggart.[41] As for Budd's "light":

> [W]ith little or no sharpness of faculty or any trace of the wisdom of the serpent, nor yet quite a dove, he possessed that kind and degree of intelligence going along with the unconventional rectitude of a sound human creature, one to whom not yet has been proffered the questionable apple of knowledge. He was illiterate; he could not read. . . . (P. 52)

Budd could not read--one of the prime requisites for developing the type of "light" that Arnold said was lacking in the Barbarians.

Arnold also noted that in an "epoch of concentration" (stable periods), aristocracies are the natural rulers, but in

> epochs of expansion [revolutionary periods] such as that in which we now live . . . aristocracies with their natural clinging to established fact, their want of sense for the flux of things, are bewildered and helpless. . . . The best powers are shown by the best men of an aristocracy at such an epoch are . . . powers of industry powers of intelligence; and these powers thus exhibited, tend really not to strengthen the aristocracy, but to take their owners out of it, to expose them to the dissolving agencies of thought and change, to make them men of the modern spirit and of the future.[42]

Budd is similar to Arnold's Barbarian: much "sweetness," no "light," and a "want of sense for the flux of things." Vere is almost one of Arnold's "best men of an aristocracy." Although Vere is not led to

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[41]Dour and dark Claggart does not easily fit into Arnold's generalizations. Without trying to make this comparison too exact, I suggest that Claggart represents Melville's criticism of Arnold's classifications. Arnold assumes (like Emerson) that intelligence properly cultivated will lead to our "best selves." But Melville's microcosms frequently have villains like Jackson, Bland, or Claggart whose acute minds to not lead to goodness—whose "intellectuality" serves their "natural depravity" (Billy Budd, p. 75).

[42]Arnold, p. 69.

"the modern spirit" (a phrase Melville would be suspicious of), he is of the aristocracy but distinct from it. His intellectualism tends to separate him from his peers (6. 63). The narrator stresses that his industry made him

> a sailor of distinction even in a time prolific of renowned seamen. Though allied to the higher nobility, his advancement had not been altogether owing to influences connected with that circumstance. He had seen much service, been in various engagements, always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline; thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so. (P. 60)

This balance of industry and intellectualism makes Vere seem like the best of Arnold's cultured men. As the narrator says, Vere "was an exceptional character. Unlike no few of England's renowned sailors, long and arduous service with signal devotion to it had not resulted in absorbing and salting the entire man" (p. 62).

Continuing his description of the aristocracy's best men during periods of expansion, Arnold said:

> If, as sometimes happens, they add to their non-aristocratical qualities of labour and thought, a strong dose of aristocratical qualities also,--of pride, defiance, turn for resistance,--this truly aristocratical side of them, so far from adding any strength to them, really neutralises their force and makes them impracticable and ineffective.[43]

While pride and defiance do not seem particularly applicable to Vere, a "turn for resistance" might be. As mentioned earlier, "His settled convictions were as a dike against those invading waters of novel opinion, social, political, and otherwise . . ." But the narrator also says that Vere opposed these novel ideas not because they were a threat to privilege, but because, in his "disinterested"

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[43]Arnold, p. 69.

judgment, they threatened "the true welfare of mankind." Arnold seems to be saying that "true" disinterestedness will lead the best men to an accommodation with the "modern spirit." In Vere, Melville seems to be saying that a thoughtful and capable man can use his best judgment and still prefer the "truths" of a classical conservatism. In this sense Vere, like Claggart, appears to be Melville's criticism of Arnold's simplistic division of the types of men. This criticism is probably related to that expressed in an 1885 letter to James Billson. There Melville speaks of "the prudential worldly element, wherewithal Mr. Arnold has conciliated the conventionalists. . . ."[44]

The word "barbarian" is used in connection with Vere also, but with a less favorable connotation than Budd's. The narrator describes one aspect of Vere's handling of the trial:

> The maintenance of secrecy in the matter, the confining all knowledge of it for a time to the place where the homicide occurred, the quarter-deck cabin; in these particulars lurked some resemblance to the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian. (P. 103)

As Hayford and Sealts say, "[T]his sentence is nearer than any other in Billy Budd to indicating disapproval of Vere's course of action."[45] But the allusion is not an outright condemnation by the narrator. The comparison is more to the secret setting than to the characters.

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[44]This letter can be found in The Melville Log, p. 795. In it Melville is praising James Thomson's Essays and Phantasies. He tells Billson that Thomson could not put that "worldly element" in his essays for it would be "too much like trimming--if trimming in fact it be." In Matthew Arnold and American Culture, Univ. of California Publications: English Studies, Vol. 17 (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1957), John Henry Raleigh notes that the "if" clause tends to undercut the criticism of Arnold (p. 251). In any case, the letter shows that Melville was thinking of Arnold in this period.

[45]H & S, p. 177.

Melville would not ascribe to Peter the argument from principle or the compassion for the individual which he ascribes to Vere. Two paragraphs later, the narrator gives support for Vere's position by relating Vere's "sense of urgency" stemming from a fear that Budd's act will provoke an outbreak like that of the Nore. The point is that nothing in the story resolves the dilemma for the reader. As the narrator says when he broaches the subject of secrecy, Vere "may or may not have erred" (p. 103).

The Bellipotent also contains Arnold's other two classes of society. Not much is said about the Philistines, or middle class. The narrator dismisses them at the beginning of Chapter 8: "The lieutenants and other commissioned gentlemen forming Captain Vere's staff it is not not necessary here to particularize, nor needs it to make any mention of any of the warrant officers" (p. 63). The point could also be made that when the middle ranking people do enter the story (the officers at the trial), they are overwhelmed by Vere's careful delineation of the crisis and forfeit whatever influence they could have had. They are "well meaning men not intellectually mature" (p. 109). Like Arnold's Philistines, they lack both "sweetness and light."

The word "populace" is used only once in Billy Budd. Arnold praised part of the working class for its industry; of the rest, he said:

> The vast portion, lastly, of the working class which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes, and is beginning to perplex us by marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking

> what it likes,--to this vast residuum we may with great propriety give the name of Populace.[46]

"Populace" is used in the novel to describe the crew when they are all assembled for Budd's hanging (p. 123). There may be some significance in the usage here because this is the first time we actually see any rebelliousness in the crew. The sailors act collectively twice at this point in the story. First, they echo the cry, "God bless Captain Vere!" Moments later, they make an "inarticulate" sound of "murmurous indistinctness." The narrator says:

> [I]t was dubious in significance further than it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to, in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing of Billy's benediction (my italics). (P. 126)

Vere, sensing trouble, acts to meet this sound with a "strategic command."

In summary, some reasonable parallels can be made between Culture and Anarchy and Billy Budd. The most important to this study is the resemblance Vere has to Arnold's best, because cultured, men. This observation would appear to be valid even though Vere is not led to the "modern spirit." The relationship between the two works and between Melville's poetry and his novel support the idea that Vere should be viewed with compassion. His "disinterestedness" may, or may not, have wrongly overruled his heart in this particular case, but the fact that his heart and mind are both capable of great understanding makes him more admirable than either Budd or Claggart from a realistic point of view. Stern concludes, "Seen from the

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[46]Arnold, p. 87.

perspective of Melville's classicism, Captain Vere becomes a sympathetic character."[47] Seen from the perspective of Melville's lifelong interest in balance (with its special emphasis in his later writings), Vere, the knowledgeable man of action, is a sympathetic character.

IV

Allusion has been made to the distinction between Captain Vere and Lord Nelson suggested by the "star" imagery. The last thing that needs to be discussed in this study of Melville's leaders is the effect of the references to Nelson on our perception of Vere.

The main difference between the two seems to be the "larger" heart of Nelson. This is suggested by the passage where Nelson, "in the same year with this story," is ordered to transfer to a ship newly arrived from taking part in the Great Mutiny. The commanding admiral thought "that an officer like Nelson, was the one, not indeed to terrorize the crew into base subjection, but to win them, by force of his mere presence and heroic personality, back to an allegiance if not as enthusiastic as his own yet as true" (p. 59). Nelson is used, as Collingwood was used in White-Jacket, to suggest some ideal of leadership. The key thing to remember is that Melville never tries to show an ideal leader in action. Depicting action requires hard facts, and usually reality presents some drawback to the operation of idealism. The relationship between Vere and Nelson can be put in focus by asking, What would Nelson have done if, on taking command of the new ship, one of the sailors had struck and killed his master-at-arms?

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[47] Stern, Billy Budd, p. xxxiv.

Of course, we do not know, but the point is that there is always something unfair in too rigorously judging reality by the ideal.[48]

The only acts of Nelson's that are mentioned in this story come in comments on the "ornate publication of his person" in the battle of Trafalgar where he was killed. Some shading on Nelson as an ideal occurs in one long paragraph devoted to his critics. They say, reasonably, that "but for his bravado the victorious admiral might possibly have survived the battle, and so, instead of having his sagacious dying injunctions overruled by his immediate successor in command . . . averted the deplorable loss of life by shipwreck" which occurred in a storm after the battle (p. 57). The narrator answers these critics with the suspect thought that a military man's first virtue is "an excessive love of glory, impassioning a less burning impulse, the honest sense of duty" (p. 58). The word "excessive" somewhat qualifies this argument, and Melville's skeptical amusement in Israel Potter at John Paul Jones's vanity further qualifies it. In short, Nelson suggests an ideal, but Vere's problem is "real"; ultimately the two cannot be mixed. Ralph W. Willet makes this distinction:

> [W]hile Claggart, Billy Budd, and Nelson belong to the world of romance, Vere's all too human agonies do not belong in that convention. Small wonder that Melville, in his last years, should have shown compassion and understanding for a character who illustrates the complexity of human hopes and behavior in a tense and uncertain world.[49]

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[48]The situations are not exactly analogous, but Melville probably knew of Nelson's treatment of Caracciolo, a Neapolitan admiral who supported the French. After capturing Caracciolo at Naples, Nelson tried him before a military court (on Nelson's ship) and then hanged him from the yardarm (29 June 1799). Reality.

[49]Ralph W. Willet, "Nelson and Vere: Hero and Victim in Billy Budd, Sailor, PMLA, 82 (October, 1967), 376.

Even though the ideal of Nelson suffers from not knowing how he would act in the kind of crisis that Vere faced, the opinion that Vere has less heart still appears, at first glance, to be valid simply because of the way he is described. Vere does not show the spontaneity of heart of many of Melville's most admired leaders. He is not a Media, a Mad Jack, a Jack Chase, or a John Paul Jones. His peers find him "lacking in the companionable quality, a dry and bookish gentleman . . ." (p. 63). He shows "little appreciation of mere humor" (p. 60). His spirit has a "philosophic austerity" (p. 129) which brings him respect but not fellowship or the love of his followers. However, he has proven himself "gallant" and "intrepid" in action. And, as Stern argues, the emotional excitement Vere displays is very probably the agony he feels over condemning to death someone he loves.[50] While Vere might not have the flamboyant heart qualities of Jones or Nelson, "something exceptional in [his] moral quality instinctively leads him to distrust Claggart, to "divine" that Billy's silence is a stuttering problem, and to comprehend Billy's "innocence."

Vere knows all this in his heart, but as he says to the court-martial, "[L]et not warm hearts betray heads that should be cool" (p. 111). Cool heads are needed because as the narrator says, Billy's act "could not have happened at a worse juncture. . . . For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections, an aftertime very critical to naval authority, demanding from every English sea commander two qualities not readily interfusable--prudence and rigor" (pp. 102-03). And the facts are, as Vere says to the court, "In wartime at sea

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[50]Stern, Billy Budd, pp. xxxvii-xxxix.

a man-of-war's man strikes his superior in grade, and the blow kills" (p. 111).[51] We know these facts are true, so we know that Budd is not really innocent. This must be recognized to comprehend Vere's dilemma and the full greatness of the story. The narrator explains the situation succinctly:

> The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer that might be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea commander, inasmuch as he was not authorized to determine the matter on that primitive basis. (P. 103)

Stressing that Vere was no "lover of authority for mere authority's sake," the narrator mentions that Vere would have gladly "deferred taking any action"--if he had been sure it was safe to do so. But the facts just cited and the "sense of urgency" brought about by the recent mutiny overrule "every other consideration" (p. 104).

While Vere's heart and mind are great enough to understand the whole dilemma (a fact without which the story would have no depth), he must deal with reality. The narrator suggests one reason for Vere's determination:

> But a true military officer is in one particular like a true monk. Not with more of self-abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former his vows of allegiance to martial duty. (P. 104)

With this thought in mind, it might be well to remember Melville's comment on the "subtle casuistry" that had been wasted trying to label John Paul Jones's character: "[W]ar and warriors . . . like religion and religionists, admit of no metaphysics." While pluralist observers might never understand, or agree with, the absolutes which motivate

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[51] The narrator suggests the "urgency" in this case is similar to that aboard the Somers. The subsequent description of the Somers affair, however, shows that its facts are significantly different: there is no tangible act, they are close to home, and it is peacetime.

the actions of committed people, these acts, as Melville well knew, certainly spark debate on metaphysical issues. Vere is committed to the idea of law and order in this world. Melville is sympathetic towards him because this commitment brings Vere to the point where he feels he has to act in spite of the "equivocalness of experience."

The narrator shows Vere knowingly limiting himself to work within the rules of his profession and the demands of reality. This reality contains at least two possibilities about which he can only conjecture--engagement with the enemy and mutiny. Vere is keenly aware of the limitations of man's knowledge and of the pressures to act. When he spots the hesitancy of the court members, he says to them:

> [It proceeds] from the clash of military duty with moral scruple--scruple vitalized by compassion. For the compassion, how can I otherwise than share it? But, mindful of paramount obligations, I strive against scruples that may tend to enervate decision. Not, gentlemen, that I hide from myself that the case is an exceptional one. Speculatively regarded, it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here, acting not as casuists or moralists, it is a case practical, and under martial law practically to be dealt with. (P. 110)

Later Vere says, "[W]hile thus strangely we prolong proceedings that should be summary--the enemy may be sighted and an engagement result. We must do; and one of two things must we do--condemn or let go" (p. 112).

When one of the court suggests convicting Budd but mitigating the death penalty, Vere explains that it is not lawful to do so and that the sailors would never understand it:

> No, to the people the foretopman's deed, however it be worded in the announcement, will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow, they know. But it does not follow. Why? they will ruminate. . . . Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them--

> afraid of practicing a lawful rigor singularly demanded at this juncture, lest it should provoke new troubles. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part, and how deadly to discipline. (Pp. 112-13)

The narrator speculates that Vere's strongest argument with the court was his appeal "to the practical consequences of discipline" if Budd were set free.

All of these arguments are marked by considerations of time, place, tangible facts, and reasonable possibilities. It is asking too much to expect Vere, who we know fully comprehends the issues, to divorce himself from these realities. Again Melville was not interested in super-human heroes; he was interested in the human plight--in the necessity to act even with an agonizing awareness of our limited knowledge. Throughout these actions Vere's heart is with Budd and remains so even on his death bed. Whether Vere was right or wrong, he knew in one "paramount" sense he was right, and he thought he had to act. That is probably why, even in a semi-conscious state, he could be thinking of Billy Budd without remorse.

If a man-of-war or the ship-of-state had a crew of Billy Budds commanded by Nelsons, or even more ideal leaders, then maybe there would be no conflict between man's laws and supernatural ones. Until then, we still have this "problematical world." The classically oriented Vere knew that he, like Orpheus, could function in this world by charming the "rat-pit" of "wild denizens" with forms. Many critics have noted that the "wild denizens" eventually kill Orpheus. Another aspect of the legend needs to be stressed. Orpheus' greatest unhappiness occurs when he permanently loses Eurydice to the spiritual world—an act he causes by violating the laws of that world. Vere's decision to uphold temporal order seems to violate

spiritual laws and causes him to lose a loved one. If we perceive Vere as a good man, then we can pity him for his loss as we do Orpheus. And if we are sympathetic to Vere, there is some comfort in carrying the analogy between Vere and Orpheus one step further: after his death Orpheus is happily reunited with Eurydice. We might not agree with the decision Vere made when he proclaimed his allegiance to the laws of this world; however, he was a good man and a responsible leader. He was in a difficult situation, and Melville sympathized with that dilemma as much as he rued the fact that innocence cannot survive in this world.

In Billy Budd Melville balanced his concerns and focused them on a balanced man. He did not dogmatize; he gave us a work of art to ponder. Of Vere's actions Fogle says, "[T]heir wisdom and their honesty are open to question, but this must always be true of any man's conduct when faced with a tragic dilemma."[52] To go to the extremes in interpreting Billy Budd is to miss the point. It is also missing the point not to sympathize with a man in a tragic situation. As a "writer whom few know" [Melville] said,

> "[A]fter a battle it is easy for a noncombatant to reason about how it ought to have been fought. It is another thing personally and under fire to have to direct the fighting while involved in the obscuring smoke of it. Much so with respect to other emergencies involving considerations both practical and moral, and when it is imperative promptly to act. The greater the fog the more it imperils the steamer, and speed is put on though at the hazard of running somebody down. Little ween the snug card players in the cabin of the responsibilities of the sleepless man on the bridge." (P. 114)

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[52]Fogle, "Billy Budd: The Order of the Fall," p. 196.

# CONCLUSION

The starting point for this study was Melville's anti-authoritarian reputation--a valid enough perception clearly evident in Redburn and White-Jacket. This aspect of Melville's attitude on social questions has been misinterpreted, however, in claims that Melville was anti-authority, or pro-anarchy, or even nihilistic. These claims conflict with a large body of evidence in Melville's work which suggests that he also held conservative opinions; these are represented by the plea at the end of White-Jacket: "Let us not mutiny." The problem, then, was to resolve Melville's seemingly conflicting attitudes.

The anti-authoritarian aspect had been thoroughly traced through Melville's canon and presented as a more or less consistent attitude. This argument centered on the rebellions and frustrations of the first-person narrators in the novels before Moby-Dick: on Ahab's quest; and on the three innocents: Bartleby, Cereno, and Billy Budd. Discussion of the conservative attitude was very limited in the works before Moby-Dick; sometimes evident in interpretations of Ishmael; more frequently recognized as a major theme in the poetry; and centered on a defense of Captain Vere. Resolution of Melville's conflicting social attitudes would be more meaningful, if I could first show a continuity for conservatism similar to the one established for the opposing attitude.

Since that attitude seemed to be against authority, its

opposite would probably be for authority. The logical place to start, then, was a study of Melville's attitude towards his authority figures. The results of this initial search revealed two major points: (1) most of the anti-authoritarian attitude was demonstrated in scenes where authority is being abused; (2) in those scenes the necessity of authority is not challenged and, in many other places, it is specifically recognized and endorsed.

It seems paradoxical to say that Melville is anti-authoritarian but not anti-authority. The paradox is partially resolved when we see that he challerges specific abuses of authority and not the need for it. The necessity for authority and control stems from Melville's perception of the "fallen nature" of man. He not only learned this as part of his Calvinistic heritage, he saw it first-hand as a young sailor. Since authority is necessary, it is good; but since it is administered by men with "fallen natures," it can become bad. The other way to resolve the paradox is to have a good man administering that authority--a good leader.

A leader is the person who has, or assumes, the responsibility for seeing that the group accomplishes its mission or task. Melville had a concept of the ideal leader from the beginning of his career. Simply stated, the ideal is a balance of head and heart, intellect and discipline combined with inspiration and compassion. The ideal is partially defined in Typee, stated in Mardi and White-Jacket, and held consistently through Billy Budd. However, Melville only defines or suggests the ideal leader; he never portrays him in action. The leaders he depicts either lack heart (which leads to scenes supporting Melville's anti-authoritarian reputation) or they lack qualities of

head (which tends to call into question their competency as leaders). The most balanced men Melville shows in action are John Paul Jones and Captain Vere, the latter being the closest to the ideal that Melville could get and still be realistic.

Although this study began with a search for a way to strengthen the conservative argument, that goal became secondary to an exploration of Melville's treatment of his leaders. Leadership fascinated Melville, and it appears in most of his best work. It is, perhaps, difficult to see it as a topic because sometimes it is more important in characterization, at other times, in plot. Only occasionally is it a major theme. Obviously, the way to keep leadership in focus is to study those who lead. Being a leader is a common denominator for Vangs, Ahab, Vere, Bartleby's employer, and even Tommo and Taji.

Compared to his second triad of novels, Melville's first three books provide weak support for his anti-authoritarian reputation. But they clearly reveal (1) his belief in the necessity of authority; (2) his sympathetic awareness of the problems facing leaders; and (3) his concept of the ideal leader. In the first novels Melville presents three main types of leaders: ship captains, kings, and the young first-person narrators.

The ship captains are not all tyrants. The first one, Vangs, is competent, but he is briefly described as a tyrant (by the narrator who is justifying his imminent desertion). In the second book, Guy is neither competent nor compassionate. He is not a good leader, but neither is he a tyrant. At the end of Omoo, the narrator sails with a captain who approaches the ideal. We are told how much the narrator and the crew like this captain, but we do not see him in

action. The ship captain who appears at the beginning of Mardi is a "trump." His major flaw is an inability to discuss metaphysics with Taji, but he is both competent and compassionate. The main point when discussing the captains is that only one of the four borders on tyrannical; Melville did not automatically think that authority and people in positions of authority were evil.

The kings in the first three books, Mehevi in Typee and Media in Mardi, provide some insight into Melville's concept of the ideal leader. Media is most important, and a main theme of the last two-thirds of Mardi is Media's becoming an ideal leader. When we first see him, he is very autocratic. He is intelligent, perceptive, and competent. By the end of the book he adds the qualities of compassion for the individual and sympathy for the human condition. Once he achieves the ideal balance, though, we do not get to see him in action.

The most striking evidence of Melville's interest in the problems of authority and leadership is the development of his first three protagonists as leaders. While the overall emphasis in the portrayal of formal leaders (captain and kings) is on the need for heart, the young protagonists need to develop qualities of the head which will give them control over their followers. This generalization overstates the problem as it appears in Typee. Here Tommo and Toby alternate motivating each other during their survival trek, and control is not a problem. In Omoo, however, the narrator and his friend devote considerable thought and energy to controlling the rebellious crew. In Mardi Taji actively seeks command of a vessel, and through this character Melville shows his awareness that authority,

control, and discipline are essential ingredients of the social question. A close study of the three protagonists also shows that each of them feels superior to the majority of the crew. Whatever Melville's real thoughts were on democracy, this repeated fact shows that he was not sympathetic to the leveling tendencies of the Jacksonian democracy of his day. The wisdom of the first three novels is summarized in Babbalanja's parting words to Media: "Abdicate thy throne: but still retain the scepter. None need a king; but many need a ruler."[1] Authority is necessary, and ideally it will be administered by the kind of leader Media has become.

The protagonists of the next three books are also careful to distinguish themselves from most of the crew, but none of them has a chance to become a leader. The leaders in these books lack heart. Redburn and White-Jacket provide the strongest support for Melville's anti-authoritarian reputation. Riga appears competent but heartless. Claret is mediocre at best, sometimes appearing more heartless than at others. In White-Jacket Melville makes his strongest attacks on abuses of authority, especially flogging. In one extreme statement White-Jacket says we must abolish flogging even if it means dismantling our fleets and leaving our commerce unprotected.[2] Such dramatic extremes have tended to overshadow the fact that Melville almost always qualifies his attacks. When he cites an abuse, he

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[1]Herman Melville, Mardi: and A Voyage Thither, ed. Harrison Hayford, et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 637.

[2]Herman Melville, White-Jacket: or the World in a Man-of-War, ed. Harrison Hayford, et al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern Univ. Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 146. All further references to this work appear in the text.

carefully excepts those who do not abuse their authority. When he asks, "Are there incompetent officers in the American navy?" (p. 112), the motivation behind the question is not a desire to be rid of all officers. It proceeds from the recognition that since authority is necessary, we need good leaders:

> For the truth is, that to be an accomplished and skillful naval generalissimo needs natural capabilities of an uncommon order. Still more, it may safely be asserted, that, worthily to command even a frigate, requires a degree of natural heroism, talent, judgment, and integrity, that is denied to mediocrity. (P. 113)

Leadership is a major theme in White-Jacket. And recognition of the necessity of authority is a given:

> White-Jacket is not unaware of the fact, that the responsibility of an officer commanding at sea--whether in the merchant service or the national marine--is unparalleled by that of any other relation in which man may stand to man. Nor is he unmindful that both wisdom and humanity dictate that, from the peculiarity of his position, a sea-officer in command should be clothed with a degree of authority and discretion inadmissible in any master ashore. (P. 304)

In my summary of the book I did not intend to ignore the parts that give rise to the anti-authoritarian tradition. Those parts are well documented and, frequently, over-stressed to the detriment of a proper appreciation of Melville's social views. White-Jacket is also Melville's clearest statement on the need for authority and his most interesting analysis of leadership.

Moby-Dick also has a description of the great leader; one with a "globular brain and a ponderous heart."[3] Not surprisingly Ahab is close to achieving that greatness. He has superior reasoning powers

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[3]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker. (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 71. All further references to this work appear in the text.

and he has charisma. He also has a potentially great heart, but he consciously subordinates the dictates of the heart to his intellectual quest. His awareness of this subordination is shown in the ideal man he would like the carpenter to build: one with "no heart at all . . . and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains" (p. 390). Ahab leads two missions simultaneously. He uses his charisma to lead the Pequod on his private quest, and he uses his intelligence to protect his command of the public mission from the threat of Starbuck.

Ultimately Melville condemns his admirable character because of his lack of heart.[4] This censure is revealed in Ishmael's repudiation of Ahab's quest and in the fact of his survival. Although Ishmael likes his shipmates, he also separates himself from them by disavowing his oath to join Ahab's quest: "I forgot all about our horrible oath. . . . I washed my hands and heart of it" (p. 348). He soon repeats his allegiance to things of the heart: "[M]an must eventually lower, or at least shift his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table . . ." (p. 349). Ishmael also learns that "there is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness" (p. 355). If Ahab learns this, it comes too late to stop the death and destruction his authoritarian pride has caused. In matters of the heart, Ishmael is directly opposed to Ahab. The wisdom he perceives concerning lowered expectations and the need to restrain woe is at the

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[4] In a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne (June 1851) Melville declares: "I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head." This extreme position changes after he writes Pierre, but it provides some insight into his thinking at the time he was writing Moby-Dick. The Letters of Herman Melville, ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman (New York: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 126-131.

center of the classically conservative attitude towards life. Ishmael's survival seems to indicate Melville's approval of the new-found wisdom.

Melville declares he is for the heart, and in Pierre he shows the heart of the major character unrestrained by the head. But this way also leads to disaster. The rest of his works which focus on leaders stress the need for balance. In Israel Potter John Paul Jones has the head and heart almost in balance. To make him human, Melville gives him some deficiencies in both, with a tendency to gullibility being the most serious flaw.

In "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno" Melville puts Ishmael's wisdom in his leaders. The lawyer and Captain Delano are motivated by their heartfelt reactions to the title characters. Both stories are resolved by an assertion of intellect which tempers the leader's compassion to the demands of reality. Neither title character learns that "there is a woe that is madness." By now Melville is clearly saying that their unwise approach to life means death.

In the poetry one of Melville's themes is the need for thinking men to act, even if they are aware of the limits of their knowledge. Another concern is the desirability of discipline and order. One of the most succinct presentations of the latter concern is in "Greek Architecture":

> Not magnitude, not lavishness,
> But Form--the Site;
> Not innovating wilfulness,
> But reverence for the Archetype.

Both of these major ideas meet in Billy Budd.

The last novel brings together most of the concerns that were

the subject of this study. Melville's interest in the ideal leader is evident in the juxtaposition of Vere and Nelson. Ishmael's conservative outlook, with its awareness of limitations, is presented as a thoughtful political philosophy. Budd's killing of Claggart is a fact which violates authority and discipline at a time when those two things are desperately needed. Whether that fact might indicate, or lead to, a mutiny is beyond the realm of certain knowledge. And yet Vere feels compelled to act.

Vere represents the thinking man in a crisis which seems to require action. In creating him, Melville had in mind the ideal balance of head and heart. His intellectual ability is readily apparent, and he is described as having a "superior mind." His heart qualities are apparent too. He is an "intrepid" fighter, and he is always "mindful of the welfare of his men." In a pattern established in the great stories, Vere's heart immediately goes out to Billy, but considerations of the head (of immediate, tangible reality) prevail. Some signs of his compassion for Billy, the mental turmoil and nervous agitation, have been interpreted as signs of insanity. But if one is willing to see Vere as a sympathetic character, then this turmoil represents the head and heart in conflict. That this conflict is strong is an indication of Vere's balance. That the head prevails is philosophically consistent with most of Melville's best work after Pierre. Billy Budd achieves its tragic depth because Melville was not only sympathetic to Billy, he was also sympathetic to Vere, the most balanced leader he ever depicted in action.

Melville was always compassionate towards those who were abused by authority. While he was continuously sympathetic to the problems

of leadership,[5] he did not always have that attitude towards his leaders. As he grew older, he attempted to show them with more balance. The closer these characters came to the ideal, the more sympathetically they were portrayed. It is probably no coincidence that the ideal which Melville used to measure his leaders is similar to the balance of penetrating intellect and profound compassion which most observers would attribute to Melville himself.

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[5]After studying Vere, it seems appropriate to recall as proof of this attitude what Melville wrote about Paulet in Typee: "He is not the first man who, in the fearless discharge of his duty, has awakened the senseless clamors of those whose narrow-minded suspicions blind them to a proper appreciation of measures which unusual exigencies may have rendered necessary."

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